Interview
Nicolas Ferrand

Articles
Sketchbook of **Marta Nael**

The Gallery
Songnan Li , Steve Jung and
Branko Bistrovic, plus more!

CREATURES

FROM FOLKLORE

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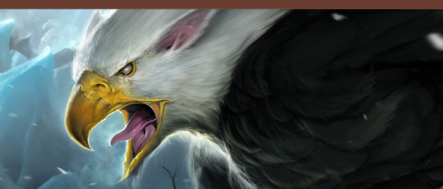
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Cover image by Simon Dominic Brewer

Editorial

Hello and welcome to 2011! I hope you all had a great Christmas and New Year. I hope 2011 is a successful and creative year for all of you. I look forward to seeing all of your images throughout this year. If you haven't submitted work for the 2dartist galleries before please do so by emailing your images to me at simon@3dtotal.com. You never know, this could be your lucky year.
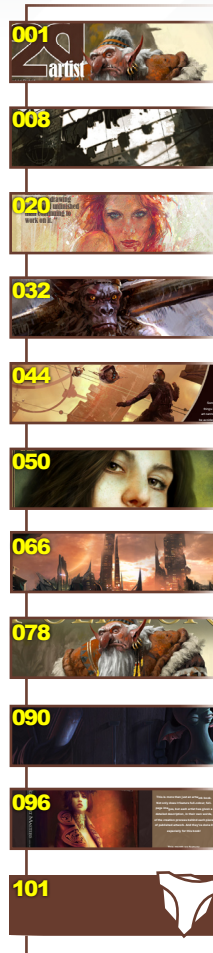
Ok, so on to the good stuff. You thought the season for being treated was over, but you were mistaken, we have a huge amount in store for you this month so let's start with the tutorials. There are some things that just can't be ignored and cheated when creating great art work, and we call these the art fundamentals. This month see's the birth of our new series which covers the vital subjects that when mastered can turn you into a great artist. Our new series Art Fundamentals will be handled by seasoned pro's starting with Ioan Dumitrescu who will be teaching us about composition in this issue.

There isn't just one new series starting this month though as Darren Yeow will be kicking off our new set of tutorials about painting real looking fantasy creatures. In our new series named Photoreal Fantasy the artists will be trying to show how to design and paint fantasy creatures to look real using any method they choose. This month Darren will be showing us how to paint a Griffin.

Portrait pro Nykolai Aleksander will be continuing our portraiture series showing us how to paint a portrait of a female. If anyone knows about painting portraits it's Nykolai and she doesn't disappoint in this tutorial. Also continuing this month is our fantastic Painting Creatures form Folklore series, and again we call upon a master in the subject as Simon Dominic Brewer fantasy king shows us how to design and paint a Troll. I was lucky enough to spend the day with Nykolai and Simon recently as they helped out with judging for Digital Art Masters, and I can tell you these are super talented!

Every now and again it is nice to see some light hearted cartoon digital art, and we have that for you in our Making Of this month. Rafael Nascimento shows us how he painted his outstanding image Closet Monster.
This month's Sketchbook is a more classical affair. Marta Nael shares her sketches with us and tells us how important it is to have knowledge of anatomy and form. Marta also shows us some of her fantastic digital work and shows how she combines the classical impressionist style with modern digital tools.

Contents

Nicolas Ferrand is the subject of this month's interview. Nicolas uses some really interesting methods to create his images, including some heavy usage of 3D. Nicolas has a style that stands out and I know that you will love browsing the images he has sent us to accompany his text.

Finally there is the gallery which as always gives us a glimpse into the abundance of skill out there today, and in this issue we have work from Alex Popescu, Branko Bistrovic, Steve Jung, Andreas Rocha and many more.
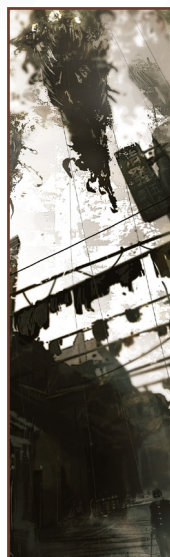
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3DTotal is glad to announce that the successful anti-piracy system used on ConceptArt.Org to protect it's video content is now being used to bring an end to piracy of the content produced by the incredible artists who support our magazines, website and tutorials which are enjoyed by so many. This anti-piracy effort has brought to light many of the users who have been pirating content illegally in the ConceptArt.org community and it is now assisting with protecting and enforcing copyrights here.

3DTotal greatly appreciates all our customers and the incredible artists who support this community with products. Piracy has become a major obstacle that must be resolved in order to see the artists who create these works and 3DTotal see success long into the future. Without the content sold here, this community and resource would not be what it is. With the support of our customers we have been able to offer an ever increasing stable of great content at affordable prices. Thank you all for your continued support. We are here to help teach and assist artists worldwide.

Nicolas Ferrand

Nicolas Ferrand (viag) has been an active concept designer in the gaming industry since 1999. Born in France in 1975, he now lives in Montreal Canada. He has contributed to the development of several AAA released games: Like Assassins Creed, Splinter Cell and Prince of Persia. Currently he's working on THIEF 4 at Eidos/square Enix Montreal.

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viag@msn.com

Contributing Artists

Every month many artists around the world contribute to **3DCreative** and **2DArtist** magazines. Here you can find out a bit more about them! If you would like to be a part of **3DCreative** or **2DArtist** magazine, please contact: simon@3dtotal.com

Marta Nael

From a young age Marta showed extraordinary aptitudes regarding drawing and painting. It soon became apparent to her what she wanted to become. Marta has a love for all artistic disciplines but after completing her Fine Arts degree she discovered her passion: matte painting and concept art. Digital art has enabled Marta to be self-employed and embark herself in a variety of projects.

http://martanael.daportfolio.com
martanael@gmail.com
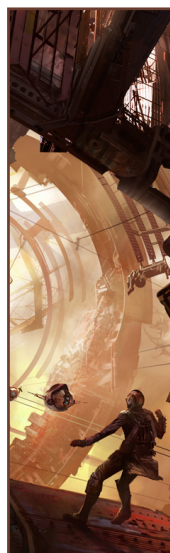
Ioan Dumitrescu

Ioan Dumitrescu is a architecture student and a self-taught concept designer. He loves drawing the things he imagines in his head and trying to convey a story to the viewer through them. He is currently working freelance.
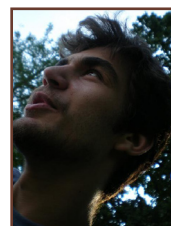
http://jonone.cgsociety.org/gallery
jononespo@yahoo.com

Gallery Image by Steve Jung

Interview Image by Nicolas Ferrand

Nykolai Aleksander

A UK-based freelance character illustrator and portrait painter, she's been working in the CG field for the past eight years, with publications in several Ballistic Publishing books and 3Dtotal's 'Digital Art Masters' series, as well as numerous magazines around the world.

http://www.admemento.com

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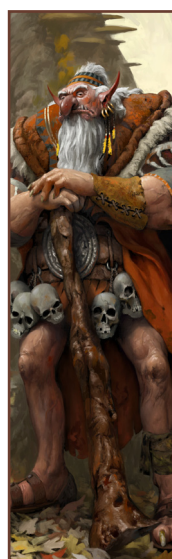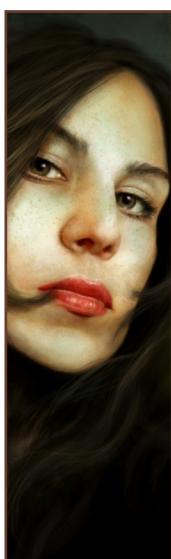
Simon Dominic Brewer

Simon is a freelance illustrator specializing in fantasy, sci-fi, horror and the generally bizarre. He paints digitally, applying traditional techniques through use of digital tools. He has worked on game art, book covers, editorial and magazine workshops since going pro in 2009.

http://www.painterly.co.uk

si@painterly.co.uk

Darren Yeow

A 28-year old self-taught illustrator, originally hailing from Adelaide, who has worked as a concept artist, user interface designer and art director in video game companies for the past 5 years, and currently lives in Melbourne. He now runs his own studio 'Stylus Monkey Design' outsourcing concept art to the games industry, undertaking freelancer illustration projects.

http://stylusmonkey.carbonmade.com

darren@stylus-monkey.com

Would You Like To Contribute To 3DCreative Or 2DArtist Magazines?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, 'making of' writers, and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: simon@3dtotal.com

Magazine cover — 2dartist, Concept Art, Digital & Matte Painting Magazine, Issue 061 January 2011. 3dtotal.com

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Cover image by Simon Dominic Brewer

Get the most out of your Magazine!

If you're having problems viewing the double-page spreads that we feature in this magazine, follow this handy little guide on how to set up your PDF reader!

Setting up your PDF reader

For optimum viewing of the magazine it is recommended that you have the latest Acrobat Reader installed.
You can download it for free here: DOWNLOAD!

To view the many double-page spreads featured in 2DArtist magazine, you can set the reader to display 'two-up', which will show double-page spreads as one large landscape image:

1. Open the magazine in Reader;
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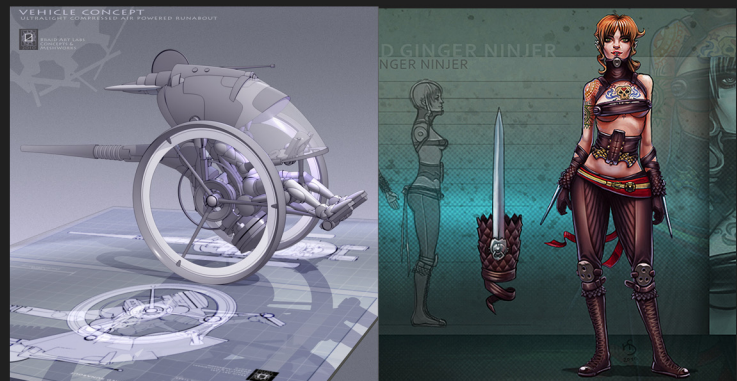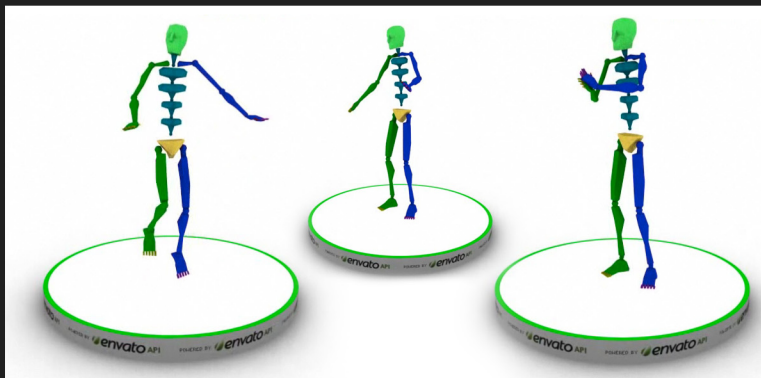HDRi - 1725 Sun Clouds

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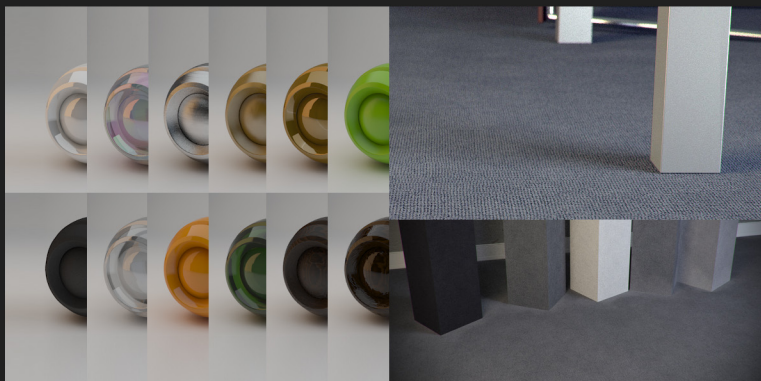
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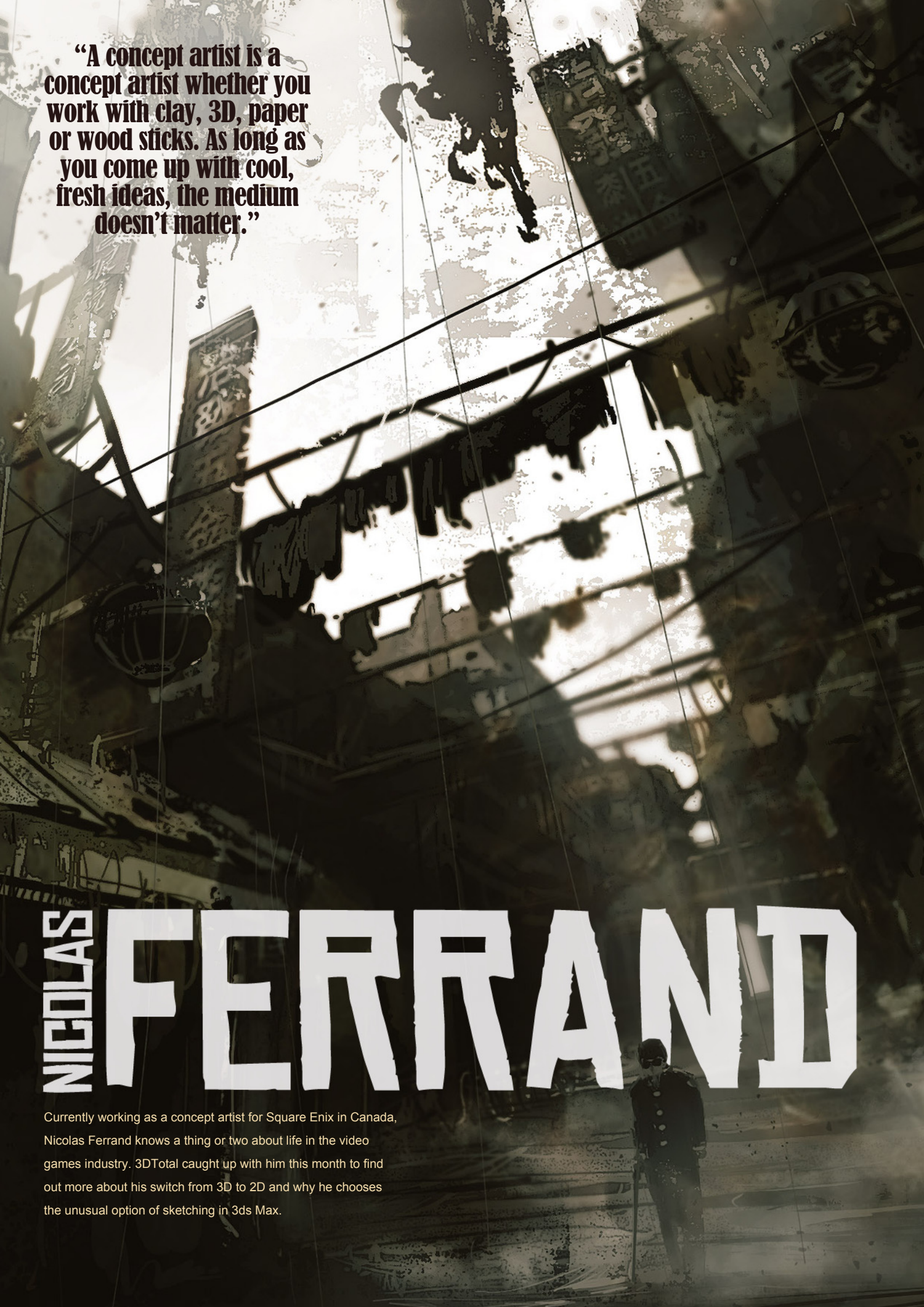
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"A concept artist is a concept artist whether you work with clay, 3D, paper or wood sticks. As long as you come up with cool, fresh ideas, the medium doesn't matter."

NICOLAS FERRAND

Currently working as a concept artist for Square Enix in Canada, Nicolas Ferrand knows a thing or two about life in the video games industry. 3DTotal caught up with him this month to find out more about his switch from 3D to 2D and why he chooses the unusual option of sketching in 3ds Max.

Interview with Nicolas Ferrand

Hi Nicolas and welcome back to the pages of *2DArtist*. It's become a bit of a tradition to kick of interviews with the who-are-you-what-do-you-do question, but because there's a great little bio on your website I can fill in some of the blanks already. You're a French-born concept artist currently living in Montreal, Canada, who's been working in the games industry for over 10 years now. That about sums it up?

I'd like to add that I studied Fine Arts and went to ceramic sculpting schools. I used to be a 3D artist as well and have quite a "geeky" background – I was pretty much into Game Watches, Amstrad CPC, *Quake* programming, 80s cartoons, Captain Harlock, *Grendizer*, *Fist of the North Star*, French comic books and anything related to the movie industry.

I am now living in Montreal and working at Square Enix, Eidos as a senior concept artist and am currently in a relationship with the best girlfriend in the world (she's working at Ubisoft). That about sums up my life for the moment…

So you used to be a 3D artist – that's something I didn't know! What prompted the move from 3D towards 2D? And can you tell us anything about the projects you're working on at the moment for Square Enix, Eidos?

3D is just a tool or bonus for me and I consider it to be a logical extension of the 2D I do. It's what can sometimes differentiate my portfolio from other concept artists (in some cases). 3D also helped me when I was trying to find a job in the French video game industry, which at the time lacked positions for Concept Artists.

When I was working in 3D I was constantly training my 2D and drawing in my free time. I'd often spend my time on 2D digital communities, assimilating techniques on forums and drawing as much as I could. When I decided to move to Montreal, I was given the opportunity to switch

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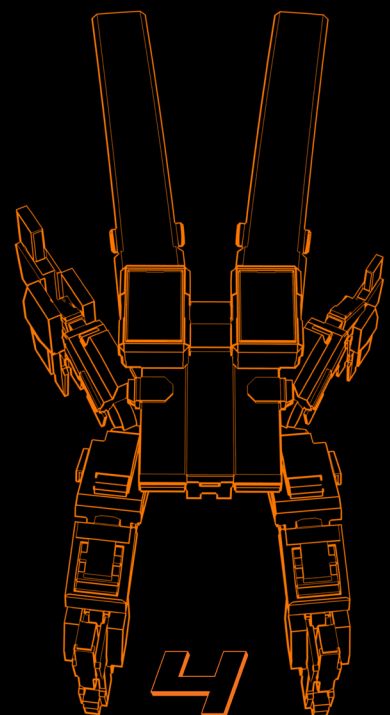| PUBLIC ORDER ENFORCEMENT | CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION |

B A R I K A D

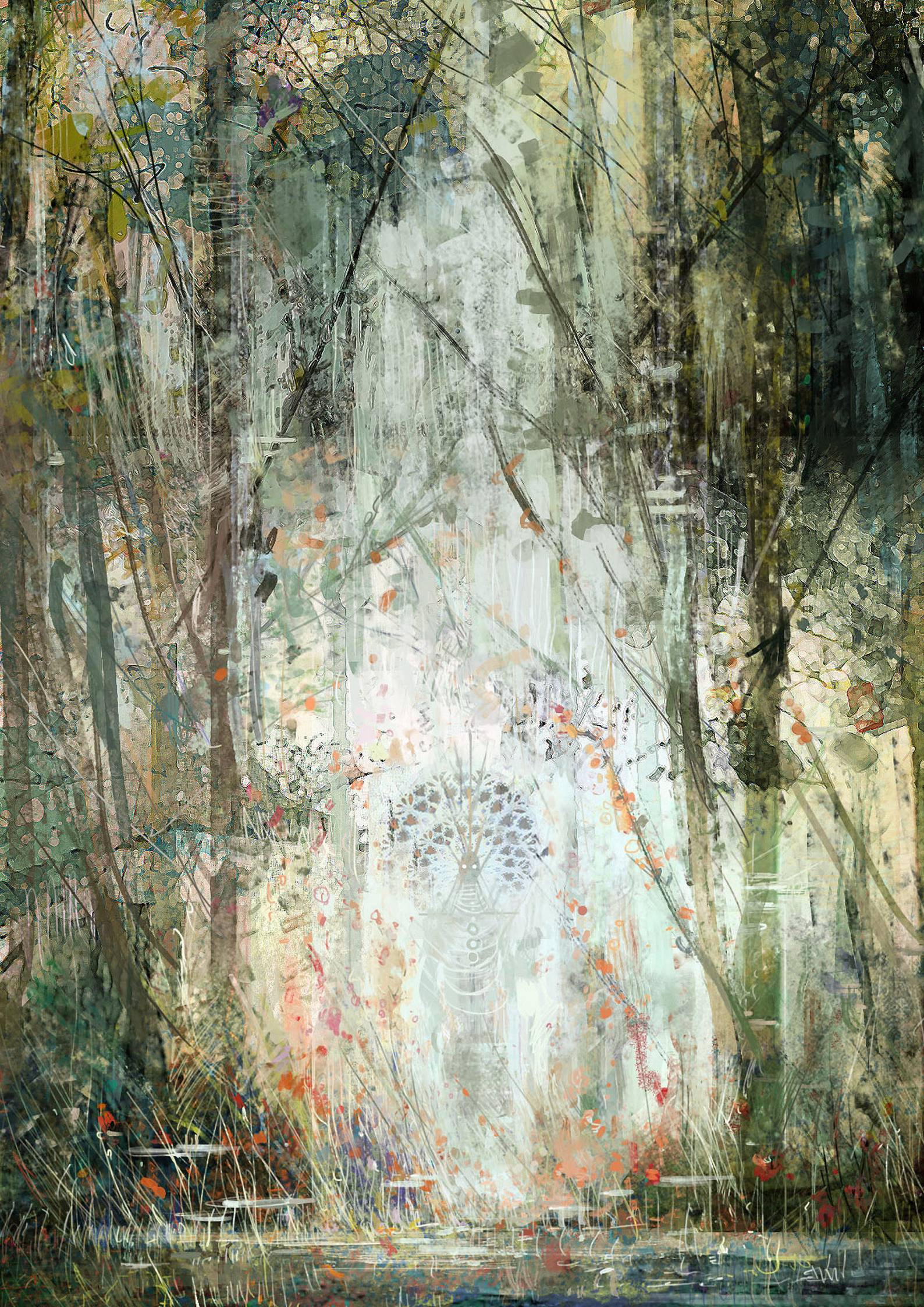from 3D to 2D, which is something I really wanted because overall I prefer 2D to 3D.

In order to progress it's really important to have a sense of competition (not a bad one though). Be pro-active every day, read and execute as many tutorials as you can, share experiences with fellow concept artists and, most of all,

absorb everything from the internet that can potentially help you and your art. So much knowledge and so many tools can be found on the internet. Your creativity will most often distinguish you as an artist.

Square Enix, Eidos is a really nice place to be at for the moment. There are a lot of ex-Ubisoft

guys, so it's not a big change for me socially, but the projects are different. As a concept artist, I need to play with new universes and ideas, and tackle new challenges! I'm working on *Thief 4* at the moment and it is going very well. The art team is amongst the strongest teams I've worked with so far in my career and I have very high hopes for this game.

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Now I freely admit to being an RPG-gal myself, so I haven't actually played any of the games you've worked on, but I've certainly heard of them! That's a pretty prestigious portfolio. How did all of these opportunities come your way? And do you freelance for the companies on particular projects or are you taken on for more than one game?

Most of my projects come to me during my fulltime jobs in large studios like Ubisoft and Square Enix, Eidos. When I am done with a project in large studios, I usually have a meeting with the human resources department to discuss a possible divergence in career paths or to find out which potential projects suit me best in terms of style, longevity and compatibility.

Besides my fulltime job I am also a freelancing concept artist whenever I have the time. I am aiming to increase my freelancing, especially for the movie industry, as I would love to see my ideas transmitted into formats other then games.

Freelancing while also holding a fulltime job – you don't take it easy, do you? [Laughs]. What kind of projects do you like to get involved with as a freelancer? As you have a fulltime job as well, do you have the luxury of being able to pick and choose which freelancing jobs you take on?

Yes… Often I will have the luxury of being able to determine who I want to work with depending on the time and the style of the project. I often aim for projects that completely differ from what my day-time job is like, just to broaden my horizons in different styles.

I like to work on many different styles of universe so the opportunities that come from various projects are interesting to me. The storyline and mood will also be a big source of inspiration to me. Working for movie productions is what I am currently aiming for; I feel the movie industry has much more potential when it comes to crazy ideas. I guess this must be because movies do not have as many technical constraints as video games.

I love concept art, particularly landscape environments, so your website is like a treasure

trove of goodies! What's the actual creation process behind these images? You're given a brief, I assume, but what happens next? Do you plan out an image or just plunge straight in and see what happens?

It depends really. For production I normally have detailed briefings, but sometimes the requests are vague. The briefings could be transmitted to me verbally or as a bundle of images. Most frequently the images sent to me are mostly intended to inspire me: color palettes, specific detailing and overall mood (for full environments).

Once I've been properly briefed it's up to me to determine the composition of an image and to bring extra ideas that will then be validated by my art director. I really like this pipeline; it allows me to bring new ideas to the project.

For my personal work, my work methods are very organic. Sometimes I start an image knowing exactly what I want to do from the beginning and sometimes I like to "jump into the unknown" and let my hands decide what to do. I often experiment with abstract shapes or I start up with one color of my choosing. I like to play with different shapes while I listen to my music… It's very relaxing and gives me a feeling of freedom. I have no limits or constraints; I just let my imagination go.

KÜB-X
STUDENT PROJECT
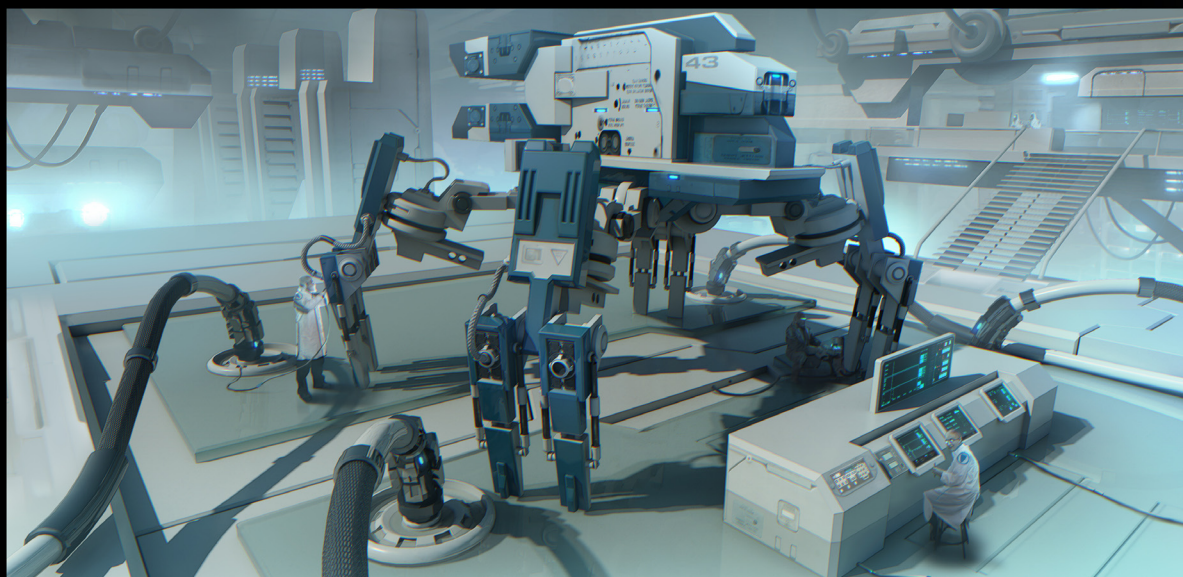
I think it's essential for an artist to have some sort of equilibrium between professional and personal work. My profession will challenge me to deliver what my client wants and will give me the opportunity to work within a team, and my personal work allows me to create my own universes and easily fly through my own ideas without any limits whatsoever.

Do you prefer a vague brief or a detailed one? I'm curious because you'd assume a vague brief would allow you to have much more freedom and would therefore be better, but then I guess it might be easy to misinterpret what the client is looking for which would lead to lots of changes having to be made. So maybe detailed is better after all?
The worst client is the one who doesn't know what he really wants. A good brief can be either short or long, and can consist of a quick plot, information on the composition, colors palettes and sometimes references to the following locations/actions and so on... If the art director really trusts you, having complete freedom is always good too [Laughs]!

Now I'm going to pick out one of your images to talk about… and it's going to be the sunset beauty shot from your *Farcry 2* work, because I've just set it as my desktop background! I just love the fiery colors. What was the piece created for? And turning the question around, if you had to choose a favorite piece from your collection, what would it be?
The Marketing department requested this concept to guide the cinematic team working on the introduction of the game. I look at it as more of a beauty shot then a piece of concept art.

> ## "I like to sketch in 3ds Max. It's an unusual techniques, but it's very good for industrial design."

You want me to choose my favourite image? Agh! It's very difficult for me to do that. My favourite image always changes. If I had to choose now, depending on my mood, my favourite would have to be "Blackrain". It was a speed painting I did with a random topic generator me and my friends created. I

particularly love this piece because of its creepy mood and surreal setting, plus there was a "Lovecraft" touch and I love Lovecraft!

I've heard that you use a very interesting and unique technique when creating your concept art, where you kind of merge 2D and 3D together. Could you tell us a bit more about this? I initially started as a 3D artist in the game industry and I merged some techniques from the movie pipelines and matte painting.

I like to sketch in 3ds Max. It's an unusual technique, but it's very good for industrial design. It's very useful when I am doing spaceships, weapons and environments. I like to compare 3ds Max to sculpting with clay.

The good thing with 3D is that I can show my composition, made out of sketchy shapes, to the artistic director and get quick approvals. With the camera systems you can use as many angles as you want to demonstrate various image compositions. Production-wise I feel this technique is very efficient.

For concept art, I like to model directly in the cam view, so I don't have to do everything and can use cheats. Once I'm done with my 3D I usually do different rendering passes including Light, Speculars, Occlusion maps and so on… I then re-assemble and tweak every different render pass (like a matte painter).

It's very interesting because 3ds Max allows me to do crazy perspective views and it gives me the freedom to spend more time on design and to refine the realistic look of my images. Mixing different media is a good thing! Animation, sculptures, photos, puppets - there are no rules. Just try things and have fun!

Sketching in Max – definitely not something I've ever come across before. Sounds like you're basically a 3D concept artist! Do you do much work in the more conventional concept art programs like, say, Photoshop?
Yes, I guess I consider myself to be a hybrid of a concept artist and level artist, but there's no need for me to change my title. A concept artist is a concept artist whether you work with clay, 3D, paper or wood sticks. As long as you come up with fresh ideas, the medium doesn't matter.

As for the software, I started with Painter in my early years. It was particularly interesting

for me because at the time I had just finished Fine Art school, which in some ways relates more to Painter. But now I am mainly working in Photoshop because the software is so complete and it's user-friendly.

> **"Working with passion is not always easy. My motivation is not always there or it comes and goes in phases."**

I am always open-minded when it comes to learning new software. I am currently learning ZBrush to work on future designs.

On your website you mention being open to "challenging jobs" – that's quite a bold statement! I'm guessing you like to think outside the box, try new things and push yourself? What kind of challenging work have you been involved in? And do you think that by challenging yourself you're helping to improve your artistic skills?
Yes! Like I said in the previous question, try different things and have fun!

I am lucky to have such a strong passion for art. Whether it's professional or personal, a good or bad project, I am always learning. I really like to try to surprise by using different colors, unusual shapes or mixing universes.

Working with passion is not always easy. My motivation is not always there or it comes and goes by phases. After seeing a thousand pictures of spaceships or fifty different robots, I often need a break because sometimes it seems like everything has been done. But every once in a while something deep inside of me gives me a spark and gives me the "mojo" I need to start new sets of images.

As a concept artist, I constantly need to work with new ideas and I always challenge myself to surprise whoever looks at my images. It is not always a matter of being a God of rendering, but finding innovative ideas - that's what's important.

If you are taking a break from it all, thinking, meditating and researching can help. It may not seem like it, but you are drastically improving your skills, so it always pays off.

Nicolas Ferrand

For more information please visit:
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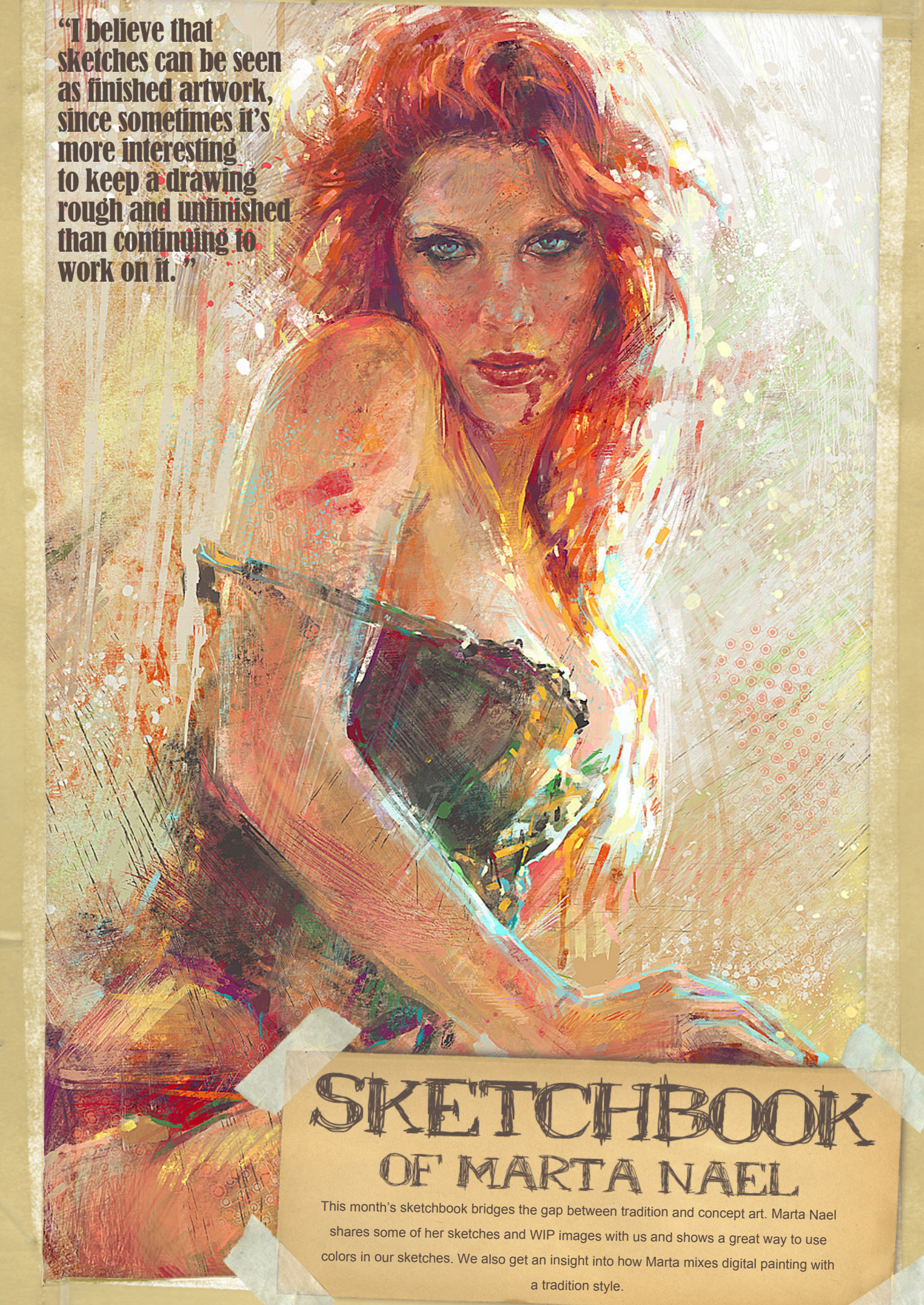Starting from $199

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"I believe that sketches can be seen as finished artwork, since sometimes it's more interesting to keep a drawing rough and unfinished than continuing to work on it."

SKETCHBOOK
OF MARTA NAEL

This month's sketchbook bridges the gap between tradition and concept art. Marta Nael shares some of her sketches and WIP images with us and shows a great way to use colors in our sketches. We also get an insight into how Marta mixes digital painting with a tradition style.

SKETCHBOOK OF MARTA NAEL

Here you can see some drawings that are explorations of poses and light made on 100x70cm paper. They took about 75 minutes (**Fig.01 – 02**). I believe it's vital to draw reality and life models since it allows you to explore possibilities and improve your skills. Unlike many artists I don't like starting with a line sketch; I feel that border lines make me lose freedom and the result is always less fresh. I always start by shading the whole canvas with a neutral color that would logically be in the palette for that piece. Then I go about defining surfaces by adding color with thick strokes or by erasing to show the canvas color.

02

03

Fig.03 – 04 are five minute sketches done on A4 paper with charcoal. When drawing an entire model in about five minutes, you have to rush to capture the mood, atmosphere and light rather than spending time on the details. This helps you discern between important and less important features; something which is useful when working on the finished illustration as it prevents you from getting lost in the early stages of the creative process, or getting caught up in the details.
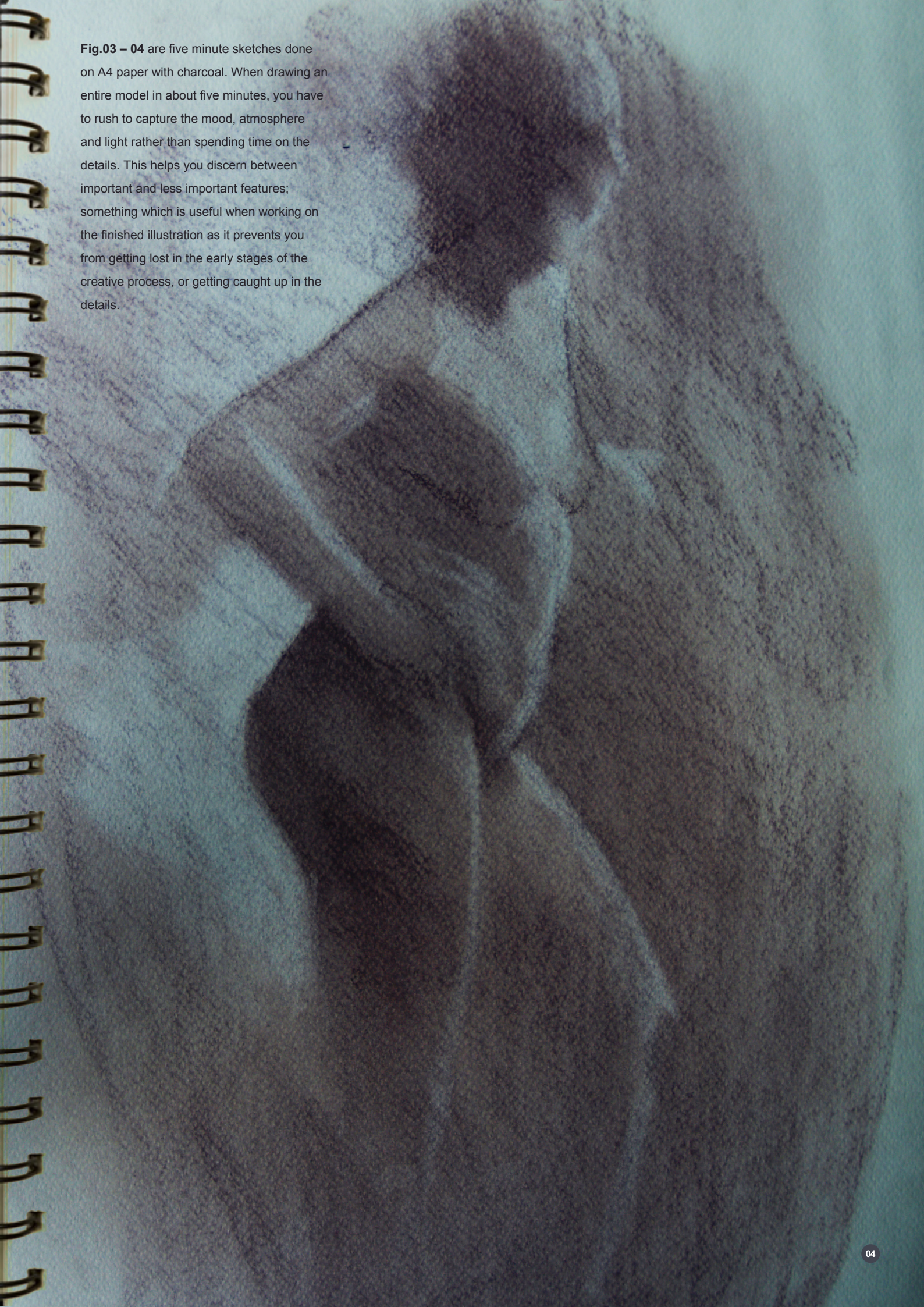
In **Fig.05 – 06** you can see how I tried to push the techniques mentioned before to the limit, and avoided defining the model as much as possible. These sketches were just studies of color and mood, and that's why I wanted to use vividly colored paper, which in my opinion is a real challenge for any artist, and an exercise that can really help you improve in the area of light and color.

Doing this helps you learn to see the reality of "over-saturated" colors, and it's this type of visualization which, when applied, results in truly colorful sketches with dynamic lighting. For example, if you have a gray surface there's always the possibility of interpreting it as a "blue-gray" or as a "red-gray", which in turn will make you decide which direction you want to go and paint in, with a light blue or a light red rather than a plain and boring shade of gray.

I believe that sketches can be seen as finished artwork, since sometimes it's more interesting to keep a drawing rough and unfinished than continuing to work on it. If you do continue, you can lose the fresh and spontaneous look or the painterly feel of it.

In **Fig.07** you can see a 100x70cm sketch in pastel, which took 20 minutes, where I followed the same steps as in **Fig.05 – 06**.

Nowadays I've moved over to digital, but pencil sketches are still an important part of my work. You can see some examples in **Fig.08 – 12**. In these my aim was not to improvise, but to explore details and practice fantasy subjects, mainly because I don't usually do sketches to plan illustrations. In fact, I usually leave sketches as they are as I tend to see them as finished pieces.
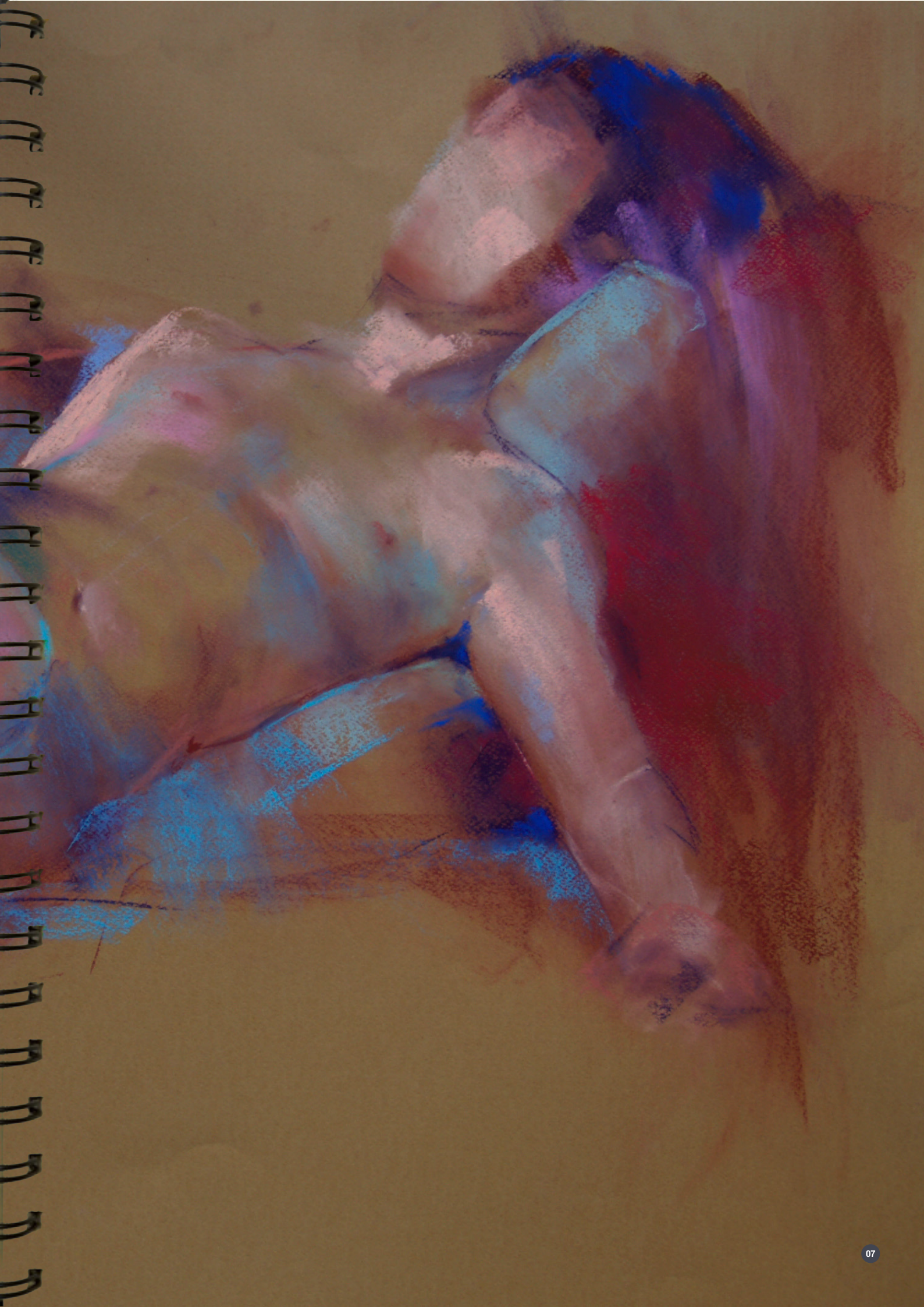
In part this is because, as I said before, I don't feel comfortable with
having line work which I then have to apply color to. In any case, I would
only consider applying color to a sketch if it inspired me to create a
realistic illustration from it. This wouldn't be the case for my usual more
impressionistic digital illustrations, as the detail involved in my sketching
would distract me, and would make it difficult to preserve the freshness
and painterly feel that I always strive to achieve.

Keeping that "unfinished" look is something
which I keep in mind when doing my digital
impressionism series. At school and university
I was always told my work could be described
as a "game of light and color". Maybe I fell in
love with impressionism because of that, since
it seemed it was really similar to what I enjoyed
doing in my traditional work.
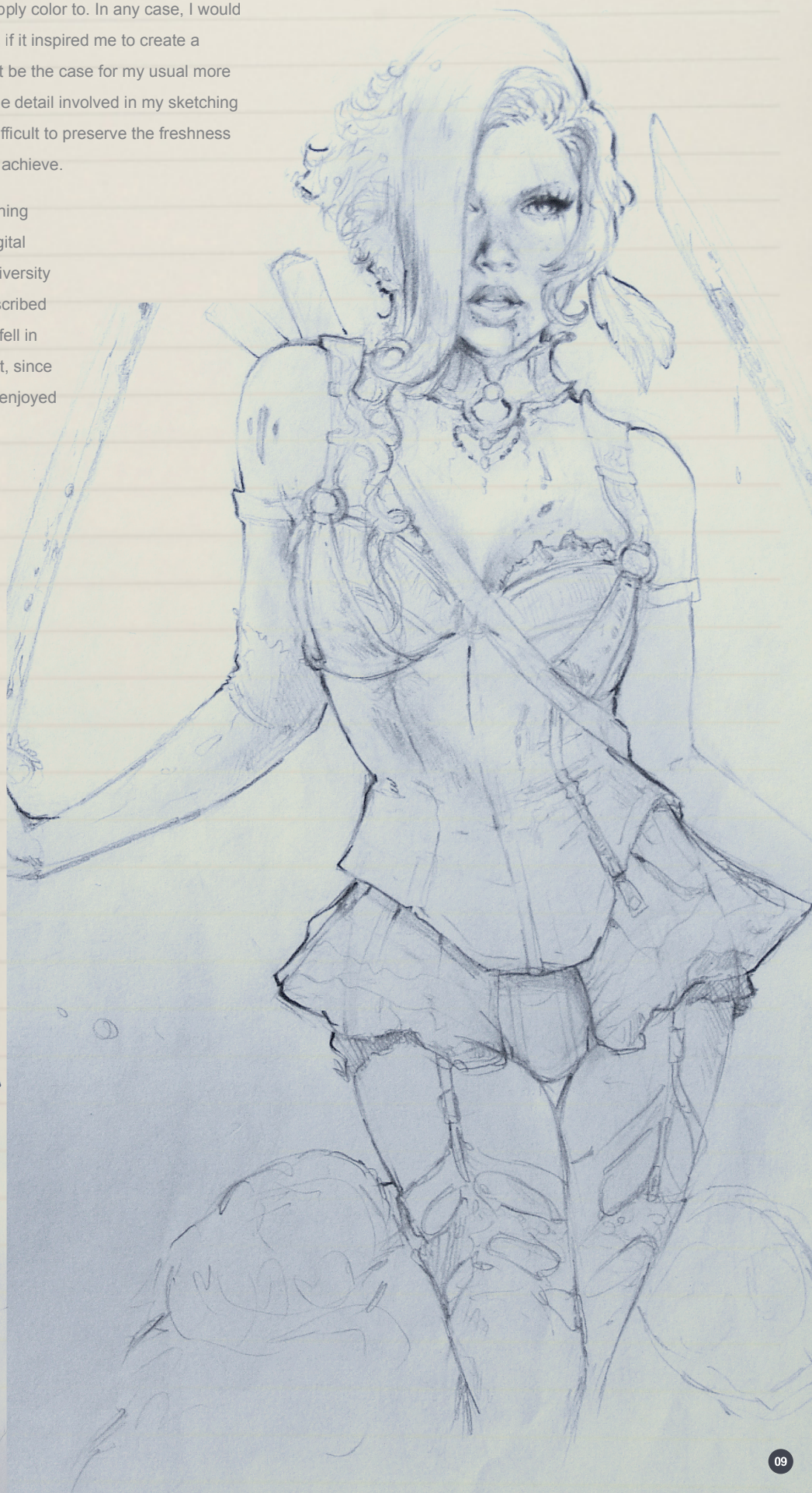
Here I just followed the same steps as in those watercolor sketches shown before. I filled the whole canvas with a flat color (**Fig.13**) and then I start defining surfaces by adding more color (**Fig.14 – 15**). At this point, the composition, light and mood you create will very likely stay with you until the end, so you must pay special attention to it. Once I'd captured it in rough, I then began to paint it to look like the reference image (**Fig.16**). I tried to make it look as similar as possible, but always with vivid colors and brave long strokes. At this stage I avoided

adding border lines; I just added some at the end to clearly separate the character from the background, and I also tended to add some lines to the background around the character to improve its contrast and definition.

MARTA NAEL

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15

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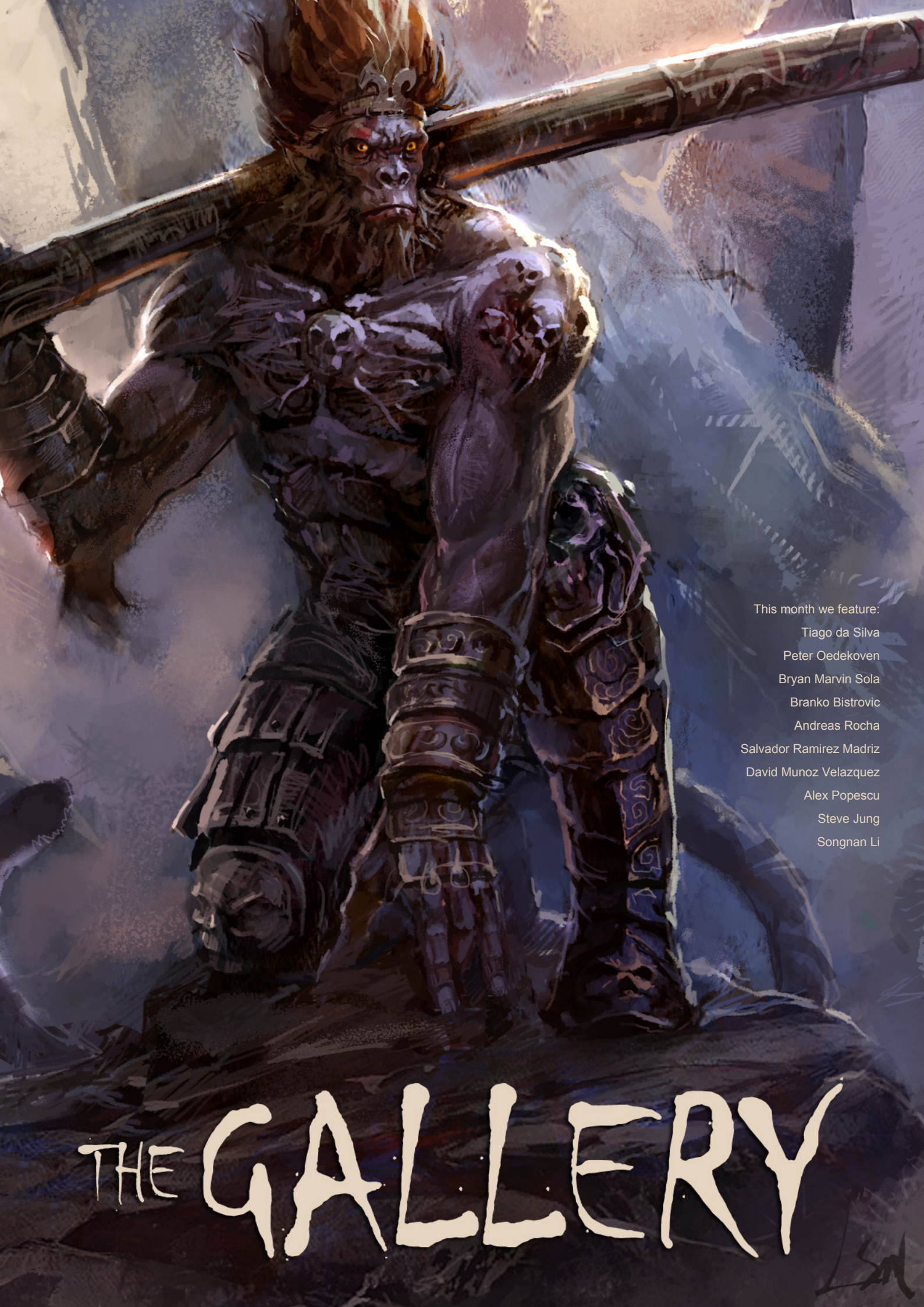
This month we feature:

Tiago da Silva

Peter Oedekoven

Bryan Marvin Sola

Branko Bistrovic

Andreas Rocha

Salvador Ramirez Madriz

David Munoz Velazquez

Alex Popescu

Steve Jung

Songnan Li

THE GALLERY

Dragon Summoner

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Monkey King

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VFS
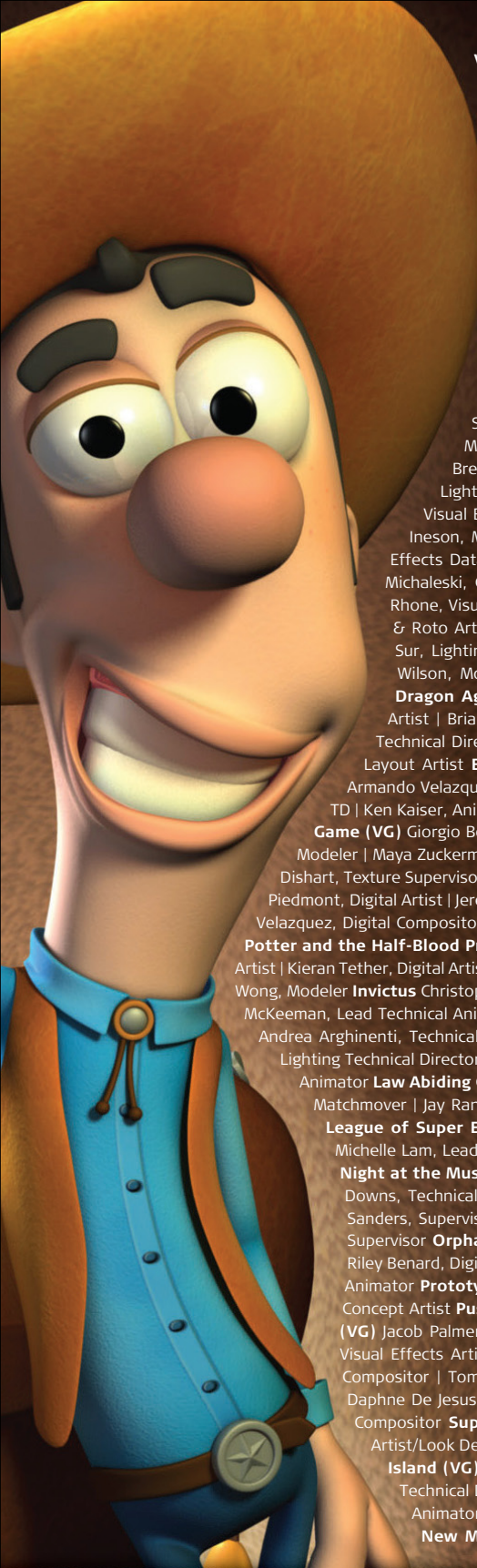
3D ANIMATION & VISUAL EFFECTS | CLASSICAL ANIMATION | DIGITAL CHARACTER ANIMATION
Vancouver Film School. vfs.com/animationvfx

Some things in art cannot be avoided, and some things must be understood to create great images. We call these Art Fundamentals. The same compositional rules and techniques to demonstrate depth of field are being used today as were being used hundreds of years ago. In this series industry professionals will be teaching us the art fundamentals that they put into practice, and will be sharing amazing tips that we can all use to improve the quality of our work.

ART FUNDAMENTALS
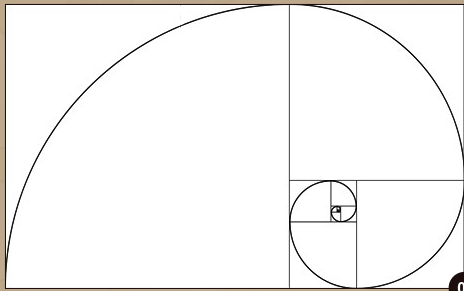
Art Fundamentals Article: Chapter 01 - Composition

Software used: Photoshop

Composition is the first word on the best artists' lips when they start an image. But what is composition? It's basically the layout of elements and a visual vocabulary that leads your eyes around an image and makes it interesting. It's the first crucial step in making your image interesting from the get go. No detail, fancy colors, lighting or action will substitute composition. Even though composition theory has rules that have been used for hundreds of years, you can always find new and interesting ways to apply them to your compositions. Try to think outside of the box. I'm going to take you through a quick guide into composition and see where it leads us, and what we discover along the way.

The Ancient Greeks used the golden rectangle that had divine proportions .The golden rectangle is a rectangle that has sides which are approximately at a ratio of 1:1.618. By using these proportions you get a very balanced and pleasing composition, with a strong focal point. The divine proportions appear in many life forms, including humans (**Fig.01**).

Derived from the golden rectangle is the Rule of Thirds, which was adapted to cope with a wider range of aspect ratios. By dividing you frame into three equal parts from each side you create four power points where the lines intersect each other (**Fig.02**). For example, the image "Under A Rock" uses the principles of the rule of thirds, by having the converging lines create focal points.
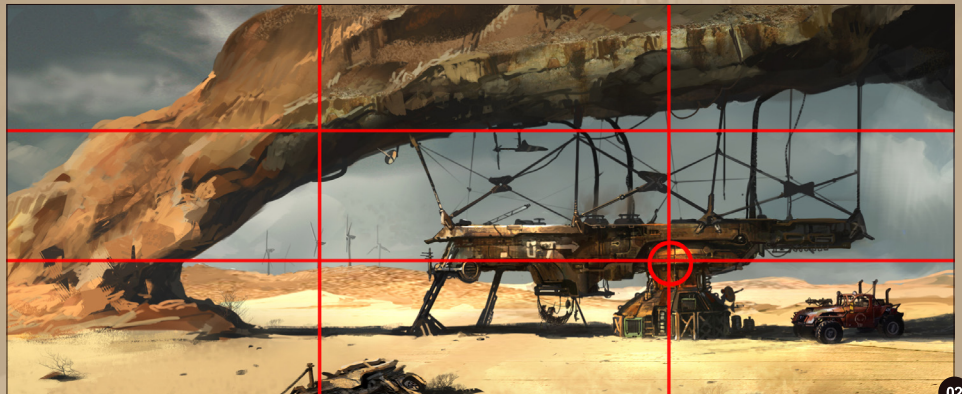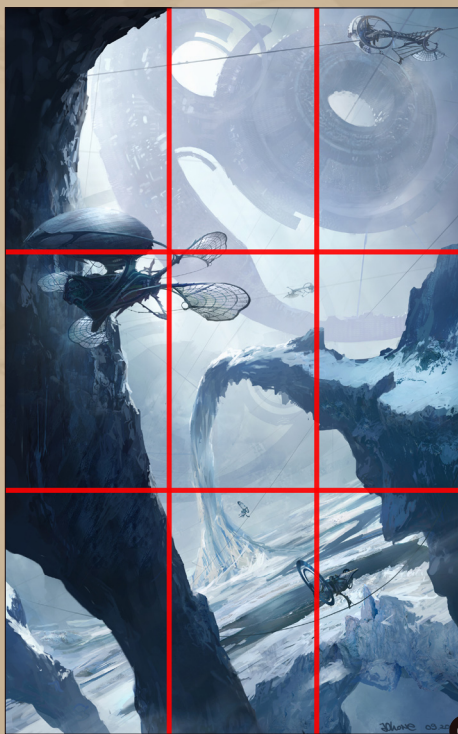
You can see the main focal point is the building (A). Then I added secondary focus points near the converging lines: the windmill farm in the far background (D) and the actual rock structure, which has a great deal of importance in the concept and which runs along two other intersections (B and C).

If you have a vertical frame, the rule of thirds can also be applied. In the image "Queen of Candasce" I placed the flying ship very close to the converging line (**Fig.03**).

Your main focal point should not always be on the intersection of the power lines. When considering your composition remember that contrast is important. It helps you to make areas

stand out even though they may not be near a power point.

Contrast can be achieved in many ways. The easiest is light and dark, followed by material contrast, contrast of hue or saturation, tension or balance and contrast of shapes, round or square etc. In **Fig.03** I kept the ship and huge structure close to the power points because, from a story standpoint, it was very important to show the direct connection between them. Then for the lower power points I left the environment where the action takes place.

Another easy trick I used in this image, which can be used for any aspect ratio, is provide a big foreground. Because we are used to

reading from left to right, this pulls the viewer in and leads the eye more easily into the image providing a grounding point for the whole frame.

This leads to another simple composition trick, which can result in very beautiful images and that is very commonly used on book covers (**Fig.04**). It's based on having a frame for your image - in this case a big L - that leaves the rest of the image in focus and easy to see. It's a great and easy way to make things stand out and can help give monumentality to your image.

When using this rule, make sure you don't fall into a trap and follow it exactly. This can make your images boring and dull. Keep to the grid at first, but get rid of it as soon as possible so you don't start to repeat a few generic compositions.

In composition even a small change can have a great effect on the final image. Changes such as tilting your horizon line are a great way of making your image look more dynamic. In **Fig.05 – 06** the story was all about suspense, thrills and action. So tilting the horizon made all the difference; it adds more narrative to the image and depicts drama and action, which gets different reactions from the viewer.

Simple compositions can sometimes be the most effective. Sometimes less is more (**Fig.07**). For example you can use your perspective to lead the viewer into the picture and directly to your focal point. Now the power lines are your perspective lines. Use whatever objects you have in your scene to point at the focal point. You can also use a technique used in films, paintings and photography vignetting, which is basically darkening the edges and corners of your image so that the eye doesn't escape. It's very effective when dealing with quick sketches among other things.

Another quick and effective composition technique is basically having your image layout
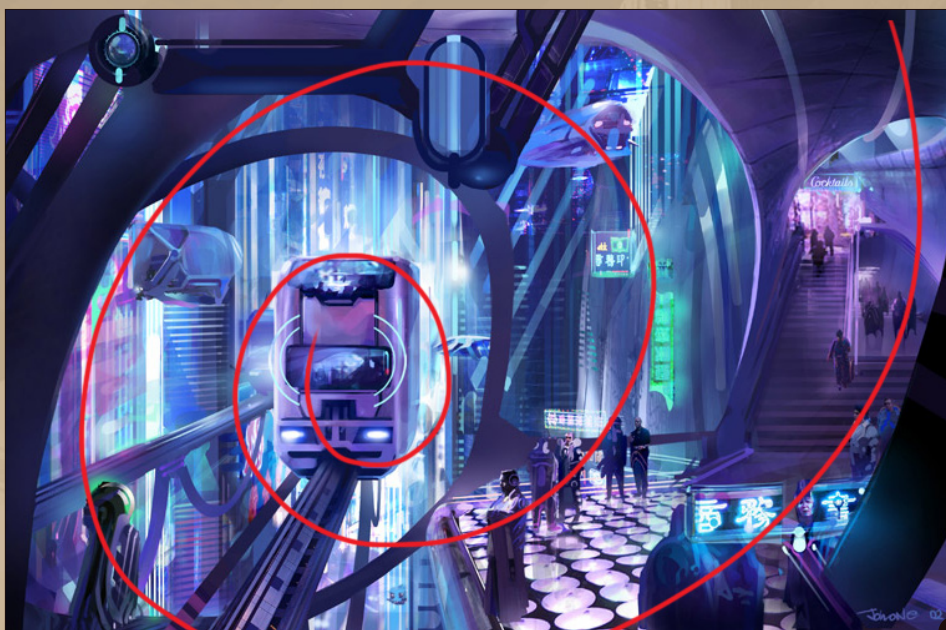
follow certain shapes, like a circle, cross, square, triangle, oval etc. By repeating those shapes to create a rhythm and a hierarchy in your image, it holds your eye inside those shapes and leads it more directly to a payoff spot.

In **Fig.08** I used ovals to create a spiraling effect leading to the train, which is the focal point of the image, but I made sure I included the train stop as well. It made the image more dynamic and gave a sense of movement to the train.

For **Fig.09** I used a composition technique that is very common in the work of Frank Frazetta and that is basically a cross, with the hero on top of a pile. Placing the camera so it is looking up at the victorious heroes helps to convey the story better. Even though the composition might seem split by the wreckage between them, it's because this was part of the story - to show tension between them.

This was actually a tutorial for *2DArtist*, using a 3D base to paint over. Here I used a combination of the implied shapes, triangles and perspective. They keep the eye flowing along their edges very nicely until the payoff spot at the end of the hangar (**Fig.10**).
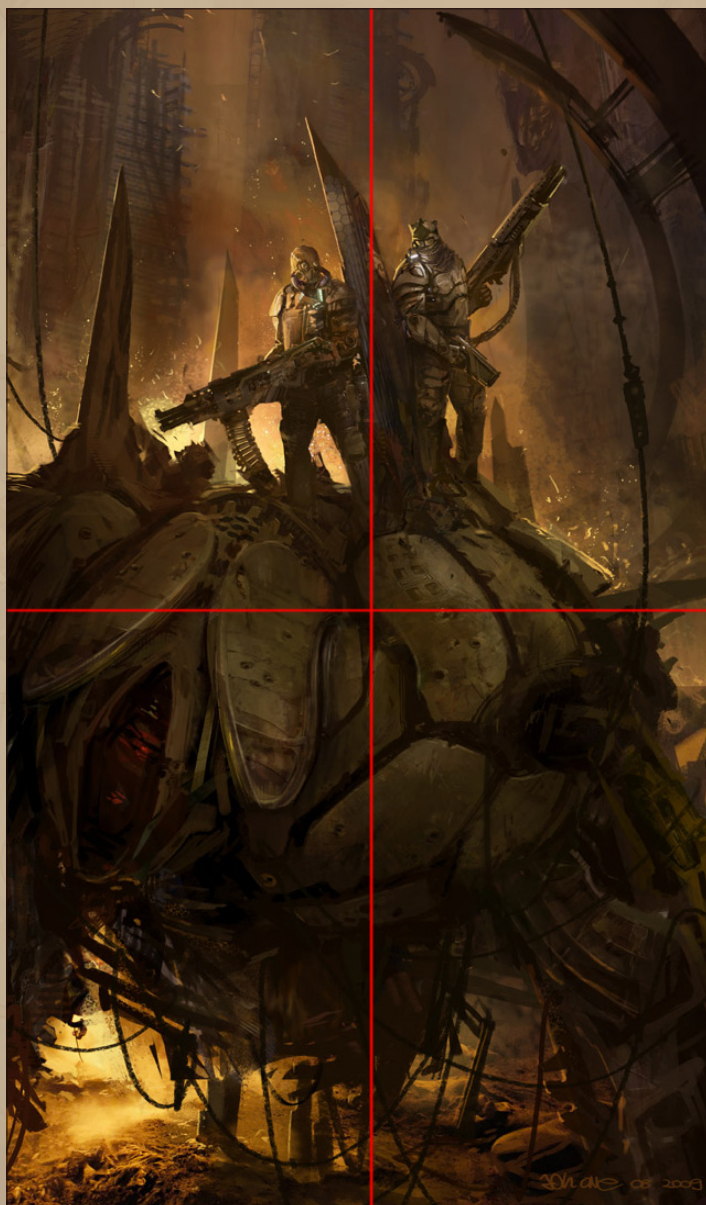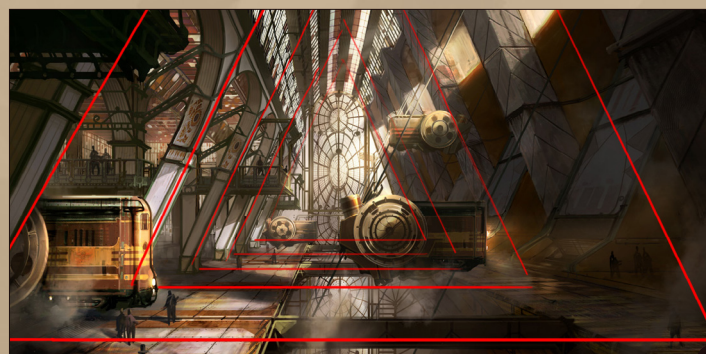
This image uses radial power lines converging to one point, which makes the image menacing and intimidating (**Fig.11**). For storytelling purposes I brought in a circle shape, which becomes the second read and contrasts the hard edges of the huge structure in the background.

These are a few of the rules of composition. Don't be afraid to change them. For me, composition is something very organic and with practice it becomes more intuitive. As a self-taught artist I use my intuition and natural observations, and bring them into my work. I start my images with basic principles like having my image framed, having objects point at my focal point and using contrast for the payoffs, and along the way I gather a few more tricks and methods that make me want to explore composition beyond the usual rules. I'm not a good rule follower so, at the moment, I'm trying to give my compositions a continuous flow, and lead the eye throughout the image, in a guided tour if you wish, to discover light, color, details, action and loads of personal elements that I put into my images (**Fig.12 – 13**).

I hope you have enjoyed reading this.

Ioan Dumitrescu

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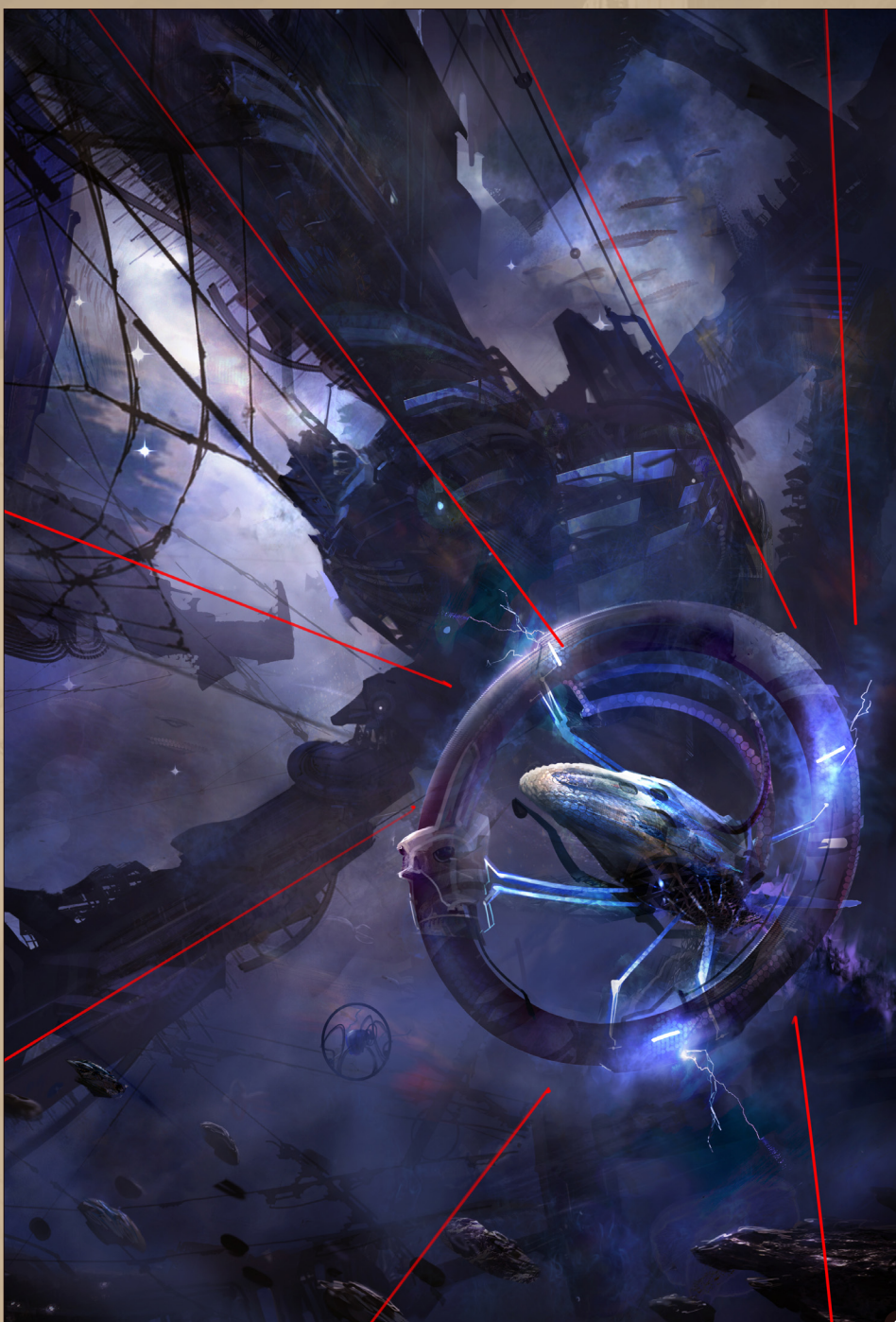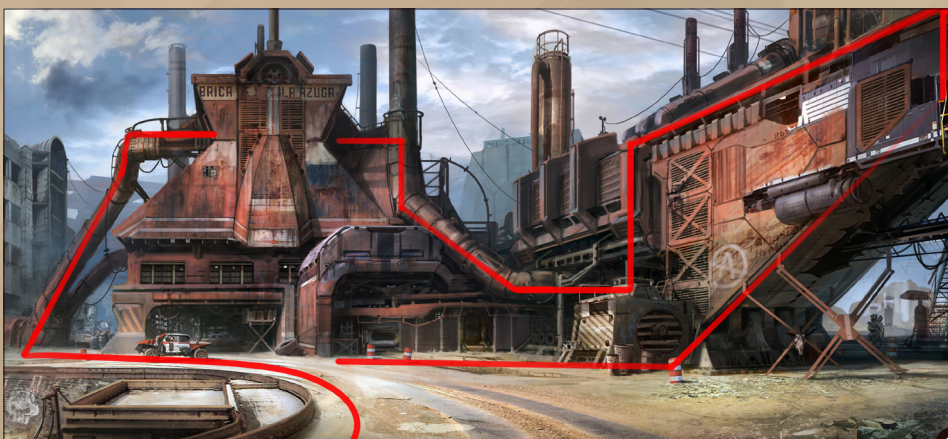
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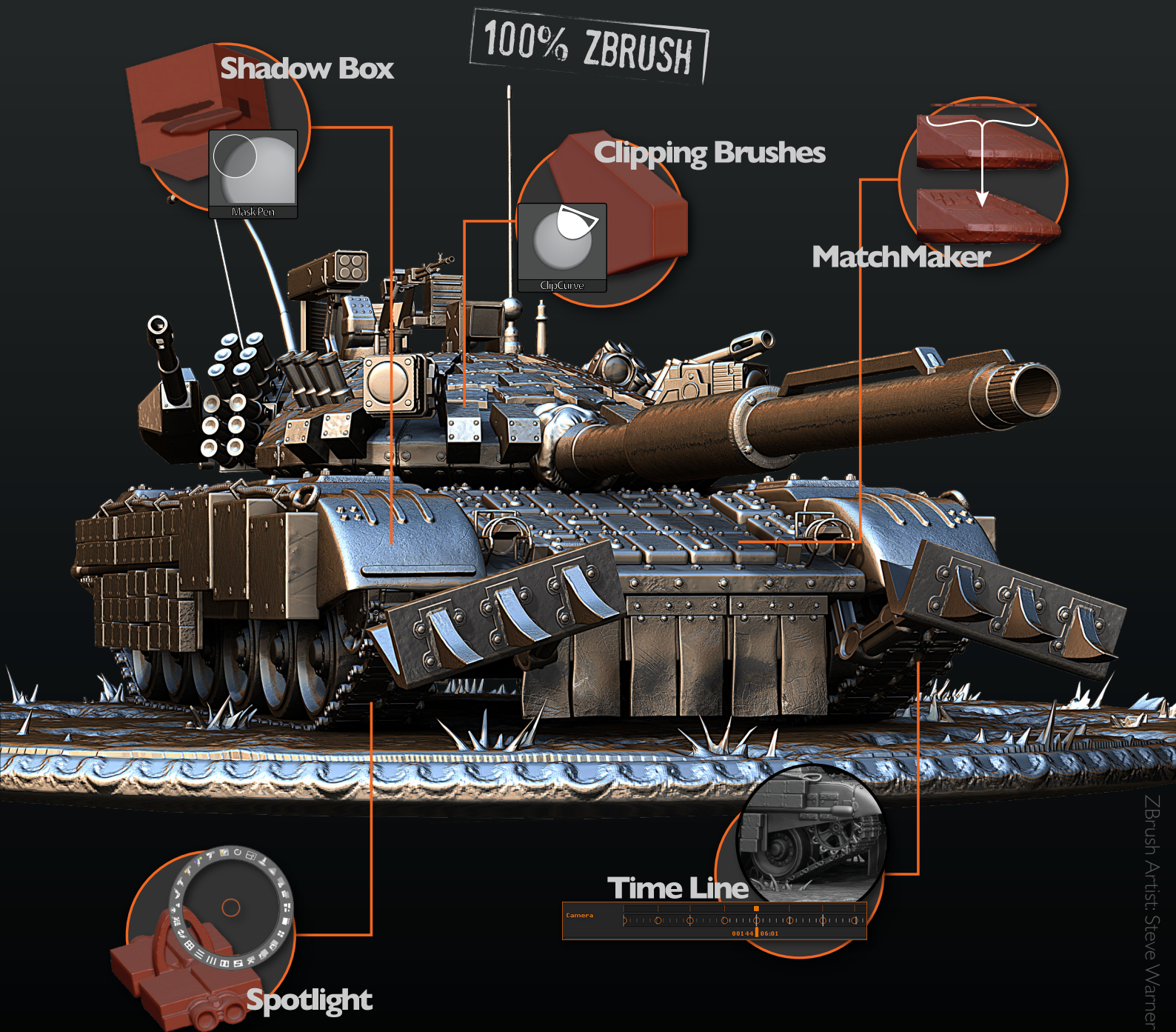
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"Portraits like these are fun to do, because you can take them as far as you want to take them, change everything or nothing at all."

Portraits are one of the most commonly tackled subjects in all forms of art, but also one of the most common that we see go horribly wrong. In this series our talented artists will be showing us how to use a photo reference to paint an accurate portrait without being tempted to do a paintover. We don't stop there though; we also venture into the specialized field of caricatures. Caricatures are a tricky subject to deal with, but there are ways that you can use your photo reference to make them easier and this series gives us an insight into this process.

Portraiture

Chapter 03 | Female | Nykolai Aleksander

Portraiture - Chapter 03: Female

Software used: Photoshop

The skill of portrait painting is about as old as painting itself. Humans have always loved to do portraits and document in pictures what they see around them. And it's no different today, only now we have lots of gadgets and technology to help us capture what we see before committing it to canvas, so to speak.

Painting a portrait from a photo (or life, for that matter) has, first and foremost, nothing to do with art. It's a mechanical skill. It's eye-hand coordination, translating what you see in front of you through your brush onto a surface of your choice. If done well, it becomes an art form, and if you add your own interpretation, it can become art.

That said this workshop will look at the fundamental basics of painting a portrait from a photo. I chose fellow artist Beste Erel (**http:// Illaurore.deviantart.com**) for this, and the particular photo I'll be using as reference is perfect for what I would like to go into. Also, I felt it's from an interesting enough angle to keep me, and hopefully you too, challenged and hooked.

As always, I'll be working with Photoshop CS (still haven't upgraded… my bad) and a Wacom Intuos 4.

Let's Paint!

We have our photo (**Fig.01**), and we have a new canvas open in Photoshop. Now there are several ways to begin with a portrait like this:
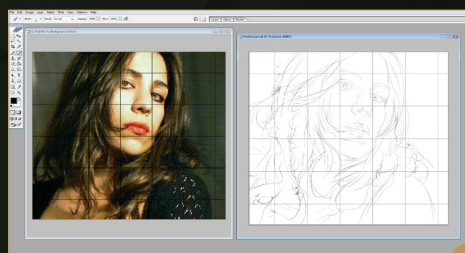
Eyeballing

As the name suggests, we can simply sketch out the composition by eye (on a new layer), frequently looking at the photo reference to make sure we get the likeness right, or at least the proportions of the key features within the face. Measuring has been known to help with this. Some refer to this as "freehand" sketching, but others use that term when there are no references involved at all, so it's a bit of a toss-up what it actually means. It is good practice to do this on a regular basis to train yourself and keep your hand-eye coordination sharp.

The Grid

A great little tool used by old masters and new artists alike. It's said to have helped Rembrandt figure out depth and proportions, and can be seen in various Da Vinci sketches as well, mainly to help with perspective. The best thing is that it's really easy to do! All you need to do is place a grid layer over the photo and the same grid over your empty canvas, and off you go - using the grid as a guide for feature placement (**Fig.02**). If your canvas is much bigger than

your photo you may want to either reduce the canvas size to match the photos dimensions, or increase the size of your photo, so the grid really will be the same in both. It goes without saying that for the sketch, you add a new layer.

Tracing

The magic word that thou shalt not utter lest you want to incite the wrath of various groups of fine artists out there, who believe that even using a reference is sacrilege. Thankfully, they will not be reading this tutorial. Tracing is another one of those very old methods of getting stuff done. In the traditional art world, people use projectors or light boxes to achieve this. Back in the days of the Renaissance candles would be placed so they threw a shadow outline onto the canvas, or the preliminary sketch for a piece was perforated along the lines with a fine needle and then the paper was placed on the canvas and covered in fine charcoal dust, which would go through the holes and stick to the canvas.

In the digital world, you just need to drag the photo onto your canvas, transform its size to
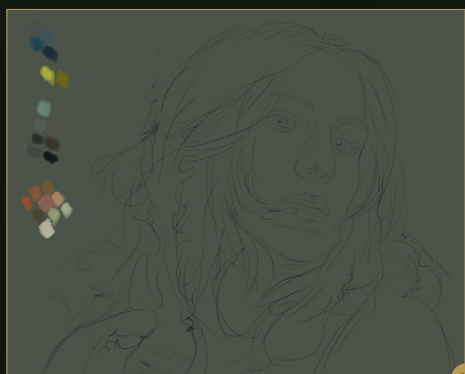
however big you want it to be on the canvas and reduce its opacity by half. Then you add a new layer and trace the photo. Once done, remove the photo from the canvas and you'll be left with a line drawing.

No Sketch

Of course, you can ditch the idea of a line sketch altogether and start straight with color, starting with blocks of it and almost sculpting the features with paint as you go along. I personally find this method easier when I don't have a

reference, as I find it's a more intuitive way of working, rather than a precise one. But that's just me.

Whichever method you use, it doesn't matter, because when it comes to painting, one thing still holds true: if you don't know how to paint, don't know about light and shadows, colors and form, it really makes no difference how you get the sketch done, or how perfect the line art is, you can still screw up the painting.

So, with the sketch done let's start painting!

I like to start in color right away. Some people prefer doing a value painting first then overlaying it with colors later, but it boggles my mind and when I try it, it always comes out looking really dull and flat. Choosing the right colors is important, as they will set the mood as well as compliment (or clash with) your subject.

Of course, you could just use the colors exactly as you see them in the photo, but that isn't always such a good idea - like in this case. Also, choosing your own color palette will stop the work from being a direct "photocopy", which in most cases is rather boring to do anyway and pointless too, unless it's for practice.

Filling the background of the canvas with a greyish green that I actually picked off the background of the photo, I start to choose the main colors I want to use. I already know what I want to do with Beste, and feel that for now a limited palette of mostly muted dark and cool tones will be a nice base to start with (**Fig.03**). The reason I like to start off with such muted colors is because it's easier to make them pop later through various means than to mute fully saturated colors without losing depth. And as you can see, I've also adjusted the composition of the sketch slightly.

Adding a new layer under the sketch, I start by blocking in everything with a Hard Round brush, with Opacity at Pen Pressure. I tend to play with the colors in that I use very little pressure as well as manually adjusting the Opacity, and thus apply paint thinly layer by layer. It would be the digital version of what's known as glazing. The color variations you get by doing that are usually very interesting (**vid.01**).

Once I'm happy with the first approach, I decide to duplicate the layer I've been painting on to get a slightly more solid look and then merge the two layers (**Fig.04**).

I continue as before, same brush, same settings, to refine the features a little more. I found the Smudge tool does the trick when blending and smoothing the colors, when used with a speckled or otherwise rough-edged or irregular shaped brush tip, with Strength Jitter set to Pen Pressure, Angle Jitter to 50% and Scattering to around 30%. This prevents it from being smeary, and adds a very subtle texture in places. At this point I can already reduce the opacity of the sketch layer, too (**Fig.05**).
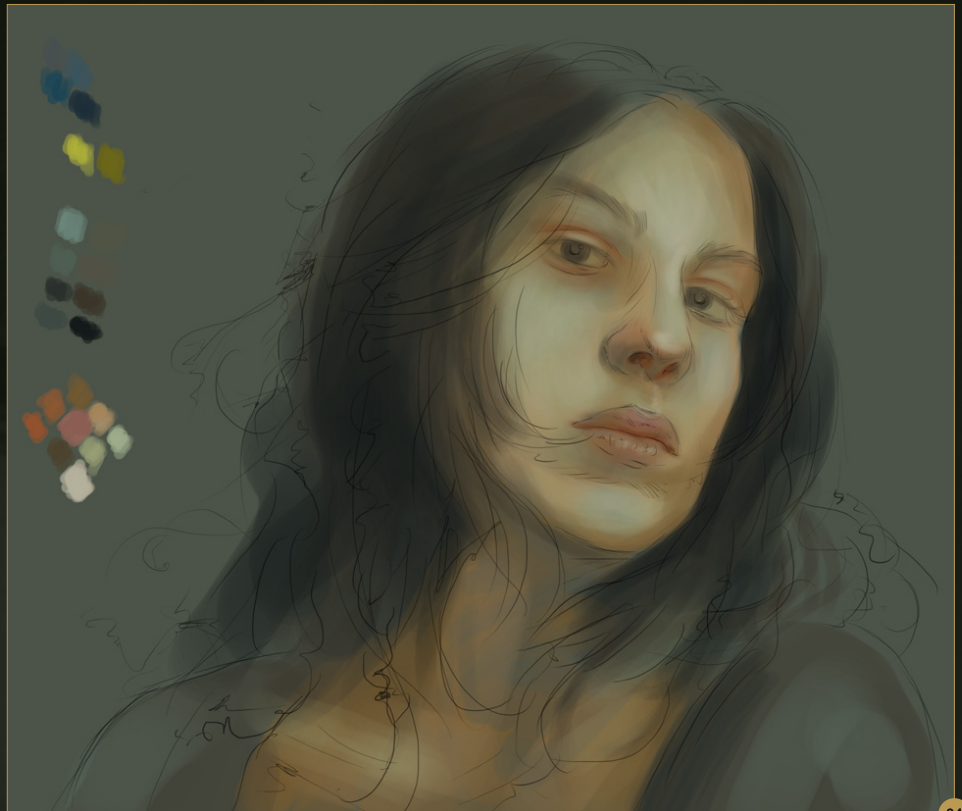
Now comes the part where you just keep refining and refining and refining, while keeping one eye on the photo reference to make sure you get it right. Sometimes it helps to flip the canvas (and the photo) to see things that you may have missed before or even leave the work alone for a day. You'll see I'm working on the hair a little bit as well, and at this point I just use the same standard Hard Round brush for this as I am using for the face (**Fig.06a – 06b**).
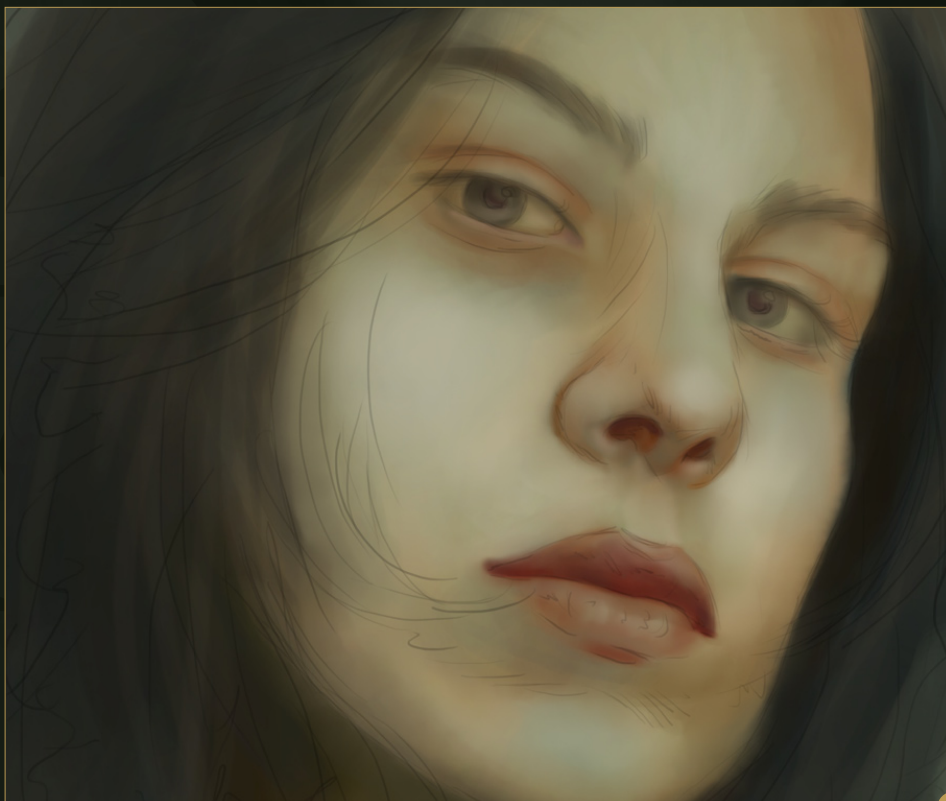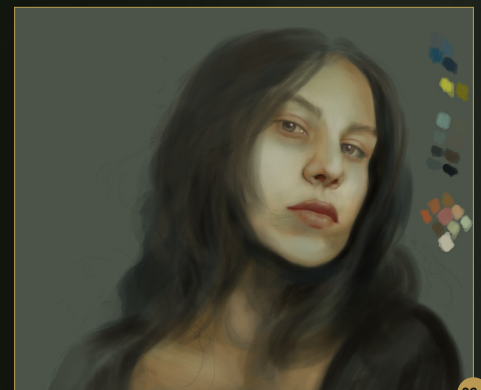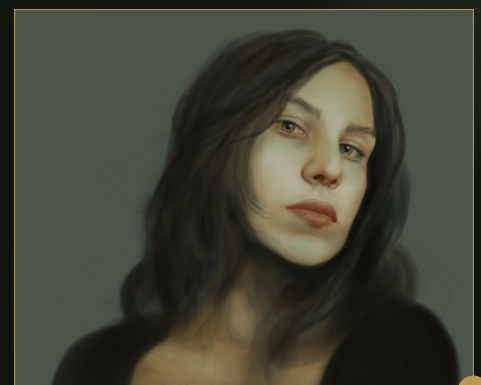
Having pulled the face off the canvas a little more, I have a better idea of what I want to do in the background. More often than not with portraits, they don't need elaborate background scenes. Some simple shadows and highlights tend to do the trick, as this keeps the focus nicely on the person depicted. Using a custom brush (my favorite rectangular one) adds instant texture (**Fig.07**).

Before I continue refining the details of the face, I want to pop the colors a little. At this stage, I tend to do that using Levels, Variations or Curves, or a combination of the three, depending on what gives me the best results. As I want to see what the whole image would look like if adjusted, I duplicate and flatten it, then do some test adjustments. Once I like one, I apply the same adjustments to the canvas that I'm actually working on, one level at a time. Here I've used Levels as well as Variations to up the contrast and adjust the colors slightly (**Fig.08**).

Next up, I mainly smooth out the hair base and shoulder area, again using the Standard Round brush and Smudge tool. The background gets a bit more attention too, this time with a custom brush that's somewhere between speckled and blobby (**Fig.09**).

At this point, the portrait looks decent, but way too smooth, which is due to the Smudge tool usage. Some people like it like that, and that's cool. I don't, so this is not so cool. For me, this is just the perfect base to work from.

Before I continue refining things, I'm going to take a big rough custom brush, add a new layer and go wild with random brush strokes. The reason for the rough edged brush is it will add some very subtle texture into the mix (**Fig.10a**).

10b
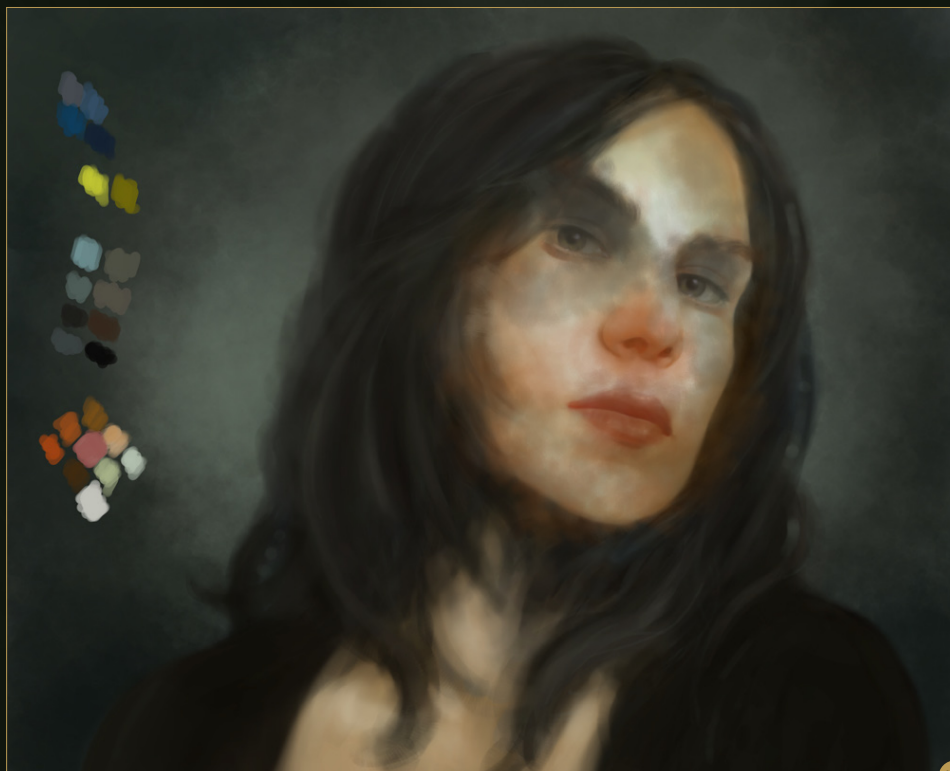
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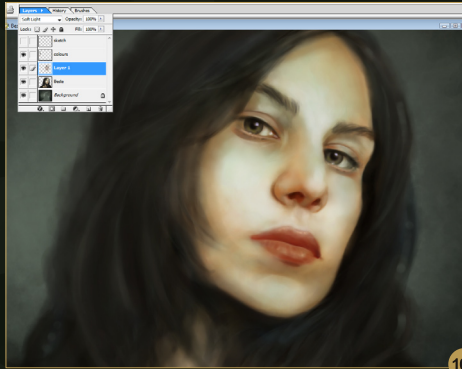
You will see that I've mainly used the warm darker colors, and there's a reason for this: it will bring life into her face without losing the green and blue tints. Once satisfied with the mess, I set the layer to Softlight (and adjust the Opacity if needed or add some more color), then merge the layer with the portrait layer (**Fig.10b**).

And from here it's back to refining things still using the Round brush with the same settings as before, though when needed I switch the Size Jitter to Pen Pressure. I cannot stress enough that constantly looking at the reference will reduce the chance of mistakes happening; after all, you are painting a real person, and you'll want the person to look like themselves.

I often see eyebrows and eyelashes painted far too precisely, hair by hair. This tends to give a face a plastic look that - unless you're designing a Barbie Doll - you may want to try and avoid. You may be able to see single hairs in the photo, and of course in real life, but in a painted portrait what works well is creating the illusion of hair (**vid.02** & **Fig.11a**).

V02

For the lashes I add a new layer, as that gives me more freedom to erase bits and soften them as needed with the Smudge tool. And don't be scared of stray lashes! They add realism to the whole. Once happy with it all, I merge the layers with the portrait layer (**Fig.11b**).

Time to move on to the lips and nose now. They don't need that much refining, but I've noticed a few flaws that I want to iron out. You'd be surprised how some small details really change the look of a person (or their expression, for that matter), so paying close attention to this can be very beneficial.

In this case, I just work a bit more on the texture and volume of the lips, still using the Round brush as before (**Fig.12a – 12b**).

Happy with the face for now, I review the general composition and decide that she needs more space, namely to the right. And I do like the fact that the shoulder is cut off in the reference on the left, so I'm going to do the same. Grabbing the Crop tool, I am going to kill two birds with one stone: cropping the part on the left, and extending the canvas to the right. When first applying the Crop tool, it
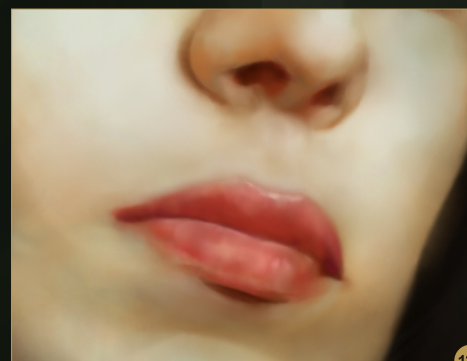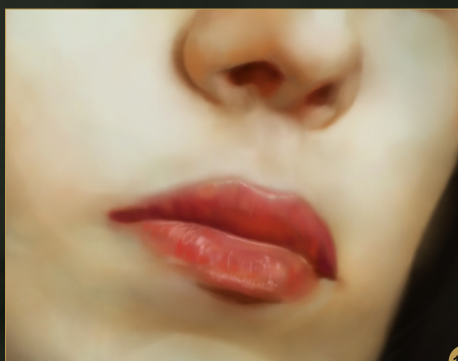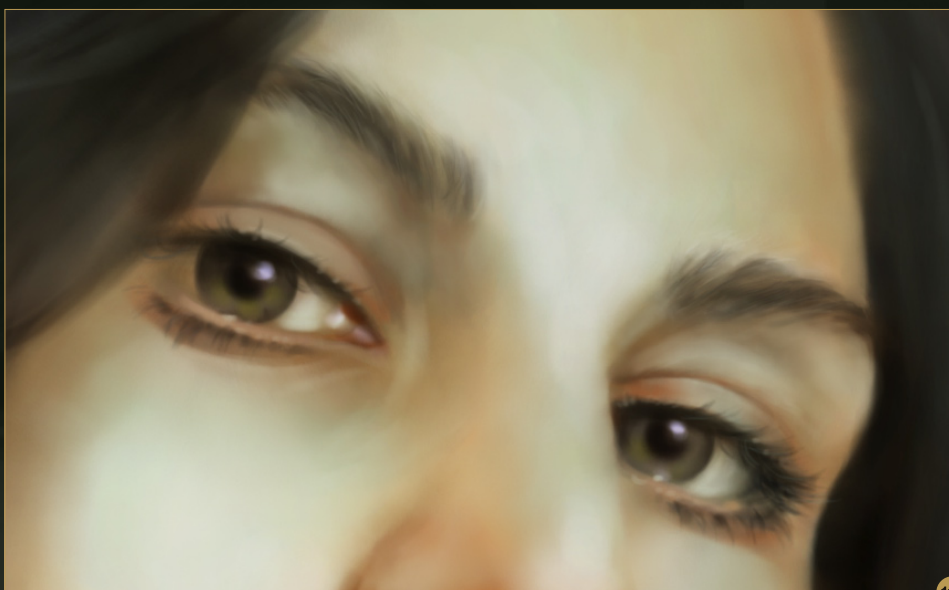
will automatically only let you go as far as the canvas edges (**Fig.13a**). Once you have that, you can adjust the crop on whichever side you

want, in and outwards (**Fig.13b**). This process saves you the time of having to use Image > Canvas Size in the main menu. The final crop
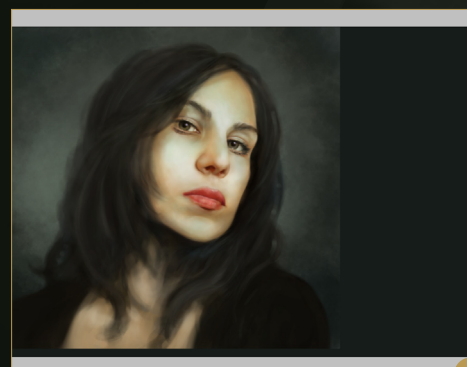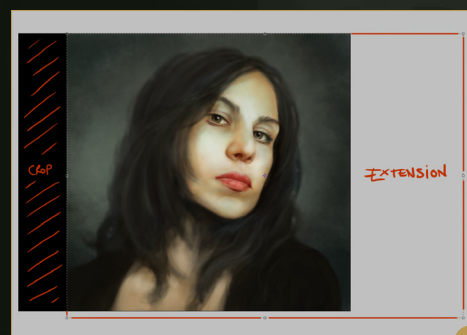
will use your current background color to fill the new space you've just created (**Fig.13c**). Obviously, the background has to be adjusted now, so I do that first. I fix the hair a little, erasing some of it on the left (**Fig.14**) and then have a look at the shoulders.

Something about the shoulder area still bothers me, probably because most of the definition that would be there, such as collar bones and neck, is hidden by the hair. Now, I don't want to change the hair in any way, as I think it's one of the lovely things about the reference photo - it frames her face beautifully. So I'm going to change her top and get rid of most of the skin that is still visible, while filling in the gap that was left by the cropping at the same time. At this point I also decide to pop the colors some more by adjusting the levels and adding another, stronger shade of green to the background (**Fig.15**).

Right, the hair. Again, here is a part of a portrait that many people seem to struggle with; they either paint the hair too washy and blurred, or far too detailed, hair by hair. Now, if you look at

the reference picture, you can see how her hair is in bundles or strands and there's only a very few stray single hairs floating about. And that is what we'll mimic in the painting.

As I've already painted the base of the hair, I can instantly concentrate on getting some more detail into it. The easiest way to go about doing that is using a speckled brush with Opacity and Flow set to Pen Pressure, and Size Jitter switched off. Adding a new layer, I pick one of the lighter colors from the hair that I've already painted and set about adding the blotchy mass that is going to be the hair, blending it ever so slightly with the Smudge tool here and there (**Fig.16a**).

I continue to add some more definition with a speckled brush on yet another layer, but reduce the Opacity and Flow manually as well as

16b

16c

16d

leaving it set to Pen Pressure (**Fig.16b**). The layers get merged quite frequently and new ones added, but that's just how I work. If you prefer to keep all the layers separate, that's fine too. Just keep an eye on the file size, as it can increase quite dramatically if you keep adding new layers without merging any of the previous ones.

Now that the basic hair-do is laid down, I can start to really refine some areas. I don't want to go into detail all over, just around the part of the hair that's obscuring part of her face, as well as the small braid. I'm still using a speckled brush at this point, with settings as before, but a much smaller size, as well as another custom rough edged brush with Size, Opacity and Flow Jitter set to Pen Pressure, and Angle Jitter at 25%. I also employ the Smudge tool quite a bit to soften up some of the strands, giving the illusion of soft flowing hair (**Fig.16c**).

I just keep at it, working on finer and finer sections of the area I selected to refine, while the other parts of the hair get less attention, though I am still working on them too. Sometimes you can get some really nice effects by duplicating a layer, moving it a bit and setting it to Color, Overlay or Softlight. Also, don't worry about it if you draw a hair "out of line" - hair has kinks and curls and generally flies off sometimes. Having those irregularities in it makes it look more realistic than a perfectly ordered hair-do (**Fig.16d**).

Happy with the hair, I go back to the face for a few last touch ups. I feel the lips need a bit more work, so I set about detailing them with a small Round brush, with Size Jitter and Opacity set to Pen Pressure and Hardness to about 50%. Of course, I also use the Smudge tool with the same settings as before to blend, but sparingly (**Fig.17**).

Once that is done, I can look at the skin texture. This is the really fun part, because the effect you can achieve with some simple texturing is amazing. Female faces generally seem a

17

lot smoother than male faces, due to a smaller pore size and the use of make-up, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't have any texture at all. It just should be a lot more subtle than if you were painting a male portrait. Beste told me she likes freckles, even though she doesn't have any, which is great, because that gives me some additional texture to work with. First though, just the normal skin texture.

The various brushes I will be using range from several speckled ones to a custom photo texture brush that I've had so long that I don't remember what the original photo was of, but it most definitely was some kind of stone, probably marble (**Fig.18**). If you wonder why I would rather use that than one of the many "skin textures" that are out there, it's quite simple: they may work for 3D characters, but I find that actual skin texture makes painted skin look even faker. But that's just me.

Adding a new layer for each texture, I select the brush and make sure all Pen Pressure settings are switched off, while the Angle Jitter is set to something like 50% - this will ensure that the texture is even all over in intensity to begin with, but doesn't look repetitive. I apply the texture all over the face, and then erase the areas that wouldn't have any, such as the eyes and nostrils, and a little on the lips too. Then I set the layer either to Softlight or Overlay and reduce the Opacity as needed. I use the Eraser to remove some more of the texture in places, and the Blur tool to soften

1) Underlaying Skin Texture 2) Skin Texture
3) Skin Highlights 4) Freckles
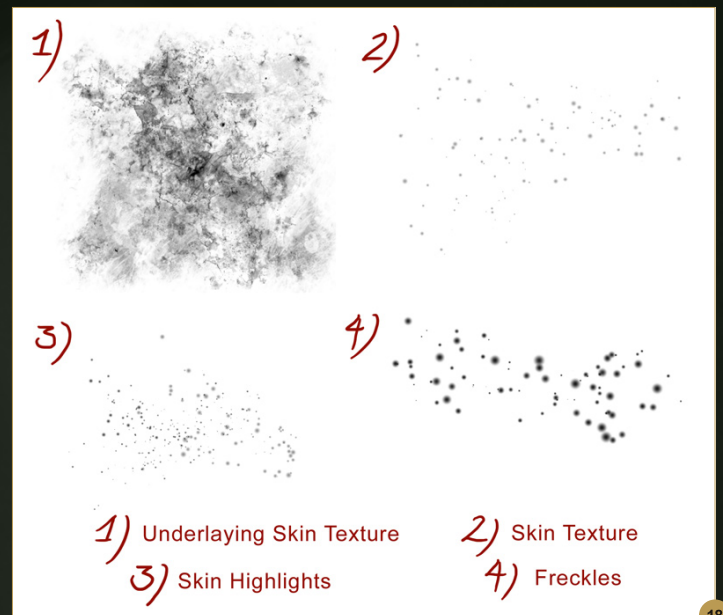
it where needed, or apply the Gaussian Blur filter. It's the same procedure for each texture layer - sometimes more, sometimes less - until it looks right to me (**vid.03** & **Fig.19a - 19i**).

The last thing I do in any painting is some targeted softened edges, or additional lighting - in this case particularly around the hair on the right. I add a new layer, pick the color from the background and using a large
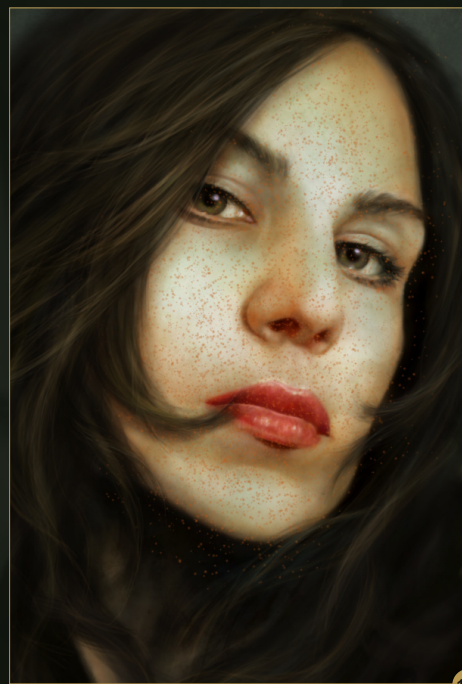
Soft Round brush gently paint over the edge of the hair (**Fig.20**). For additional lighting (if needed) you do the same thing, but set the

layer to Overlay or Softlight to get some nice color popping effects. Playing around with this is usually best, as using different colors and

settings for this obviously gives you different results.

19f

19g

19h

And that's pretty much it. All I do now is adjust the background contrast to my liking (usually with levels), then flatten the image and adjust it some more with Levels and Variations, cropping and adding more additional lighting layers if needed, which of course will be flattened too.

Done!

In Closing

Portraits like these are fun to do, because you can take them as far as you want to take them, and change everything or nothing at all. It's in your hands. Fact is, people love having their portrait painted because it is slightly more special than just having a photo taken, and it provides good practice to keep your observational skills sharp, no matter if you're a beginner or not.

So, grab some photos of your friends and family and get going! (**Fig.21**).

19i

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PAINTING CREATURES FROM
FOLKLORE

Fantasy plays a huge part in digital art. It influences thousands of artists from around the world and has become a large part of the film and gaming industry. So much of what we see within this genre is drawn from fairy tales and folklore. In this tutorial series our artists will be showing us how to research creatures from folklore and use this gathered information to create an original and accurate depiction of these fantasy characters.

Painting Creatures From Folklore: Chapter 05 - Troll

Software used: ArtRage Studio Pro & Painter

One of the most recognizable characters in folklore is the troll, yet ironically they come in all shapes and sizes. Whilst some trolls are depicted as huge and hulking, others are described as being similar to normal folk, distinguishable from humans only by their clothing and habits. Troll tales originate primarily from Scandinavia, although England and Scotland also have a small troll tradition.

For this painting I've decided to paint a portrait rather than an action scene, and to set it a forest environment. A portrait approach will result in a more formal character depiction, but will allow for full focus on the character. My troll will be an important personage in the troll community and hence will be dressed more elaborately than his peers. That doesn't mean his clothing will be pristine however, as the forest can be a messy place and trolls aren't renowned for their cleanliness. In terms of weapons I'm going to give my troll a huge, oaken staff that doubles as a club. Trolls tend to make use of the resources around them so I think a basic, natural weapon like a club is more fitting to a forest setting than a sword or a magical item. To complete this image I'll be using ArtRage Studio Pro and Painter 11. I'll do the concepts and sketching in ArtRage and move on to Painter for the coloring and final detail. Either package would be sufficient to complete the entire project, but ArtRage's strengths are in sketching, and Painter's strengths in detailing.

Quick Concepts

It's often a good idea to knock out some initial sketches before beginning the main work. I actually did this step before I made the decision to create the forest troll portrait as I described.

For this piece I create half a dozen sketches, each depicting a different type of troll (**Fig.01**).

The process is very quick as these characters are not intended for display, rather as a decision aid and a catalyst for the creative process. I use the default Pencil and canvas in ArtRage. I find the rough feel closely mimics using a real pencil. Using these concepts as a guide I choose the third character as the one I want to develop. With this in mind I move on to the actual image.

Line Work

My final image needs to be 2480x3425 pixels at 300dpi. However, because I won't be painting fine detail until later on there's no point working with such a large canvas initially. Therefore still in ArtRage, I create a small canvas with the same aspect ratio as the spec for my final image. I load my concept sketch as a reference so I have a constant on-screen guide as to what I want to achieve (**Fig.02**).

Next I create a new layer and draw a few rough perspective lines to an imaginary vanishing point way off canvas to the left. My troll will be large, maybe eight feet tall, and therefore I want to give the impression that he is looming over the viewer. Rendering the troll against these perspective lines will help in this respect.

I make the outline sketch onto a new layer. This stage is designed to give a basic, clean indication of all the main elements of my character. His clothing is composed of a rag-tag combination of layered clothing, which will have different textures in the final image. The
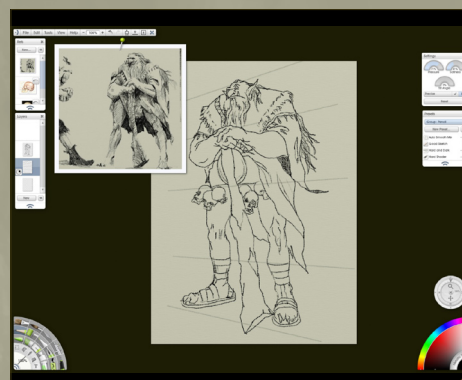
skulls around his waist reinforce the idea that he's a big fella as well as an unpleasant one. When I've finished the line drawing I hold Alt + H (Option + H on a Mac) to view the image mirrored. This helps to identify any anatomical or perspective problems.

Sketch Detail

I increase the size of my canvas to about half the intended final dimensions. This will allow for more detail to be laid down. To compensate for this I also increase my pencil Nib Size to around 200%. I reduce the Opacity of my line work layer to 30% and create a third layer on top. Using the low opacity line work as a guide, I create a detailed sketch of my character (**Fig.03**).

Clean Up

The first two layers – the perspective lines and the line work sketch – have served their
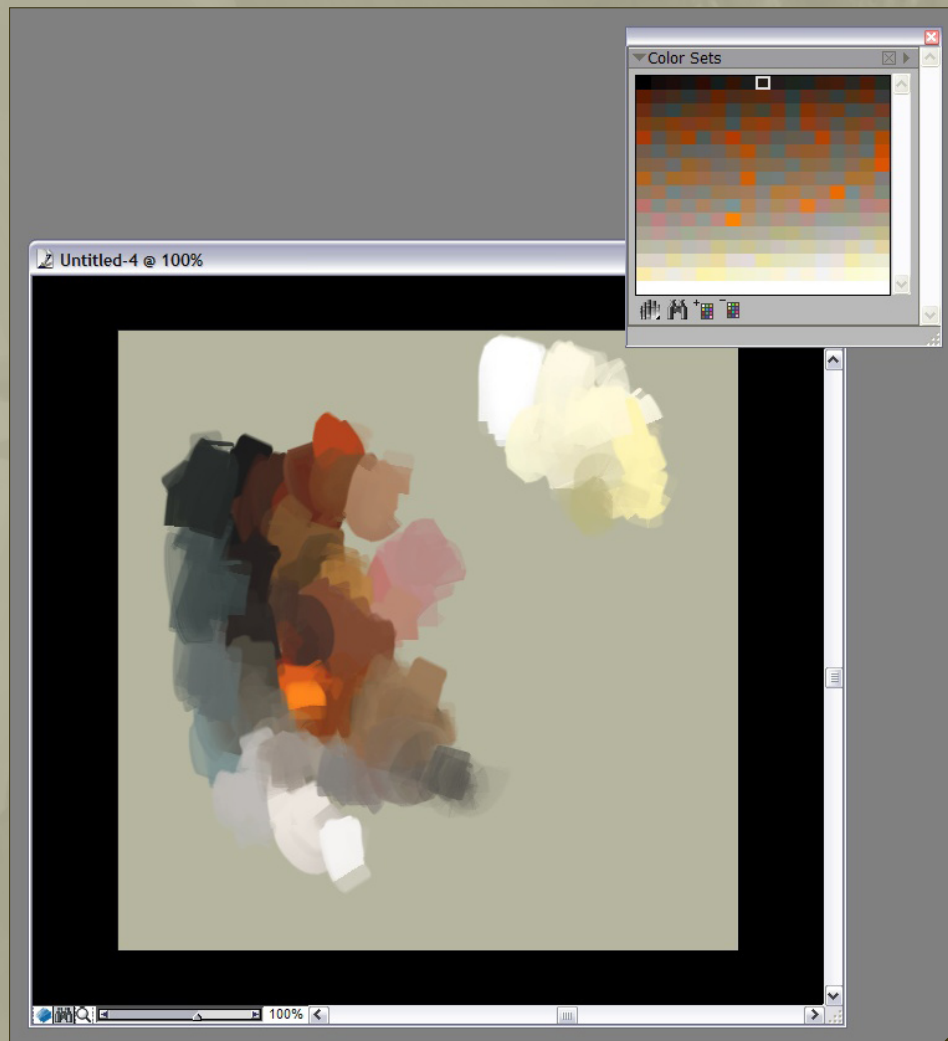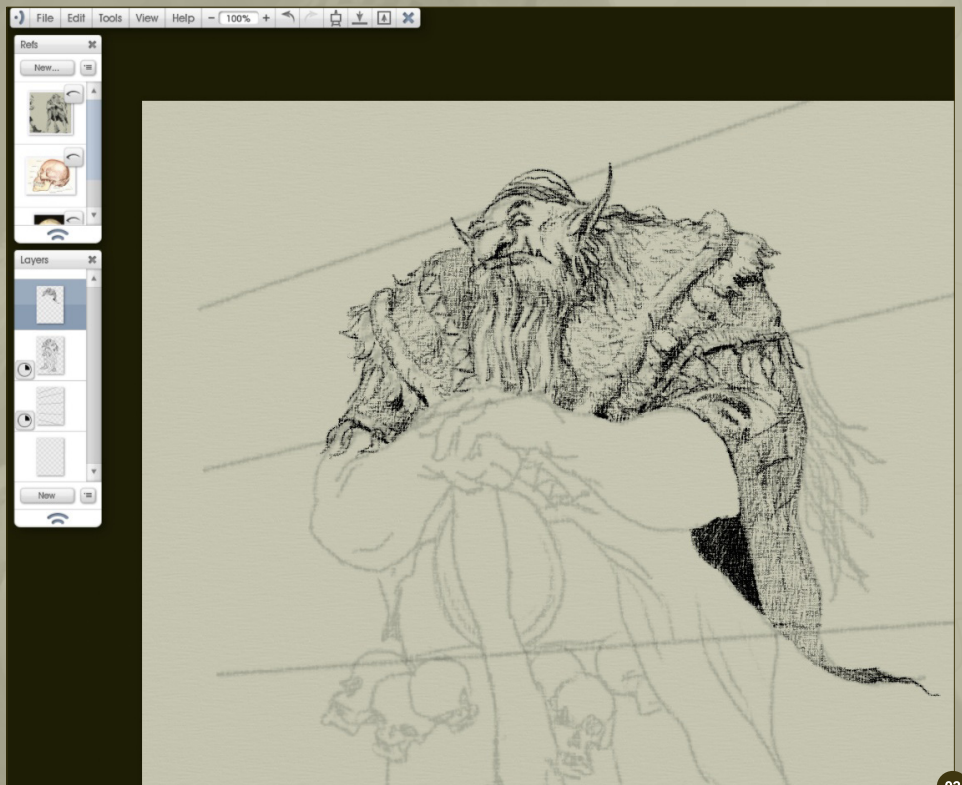
purpose, so I delete them. This leaves me with the detailed sketch on a single layer (**Fig.04**). I save this as a PSD file because the next time I work on it I'll be using Painter.

Build a Color Palette

When painting, I find it very helpful to work from a pre-created color palette – a Color Set. This doesn't mean I'll be choosing every single color

from this palette, but it will act as the primary selection tool.

To create the Color Set I first open a blank canvas in Painter. As in the actual painting stage it's a good idea not to use pure white as the background as it can be overwhelming and make it difficult to distinguish darker colors. I use my Artists' Oils brush to make a sequence of splodges representing the main elements that will be in my image – bright yellows for the sky; deep browns, oranges and grays for clothing material; mid-saturation, mid-valued pinks for the skin tone and white for the hair. When I'm happy that those colors will take care of most of my requirements, I click the Create Color Set From Mixer Palette option. This generates a 256-color Color Set palette, which I save as a PCS file (**Fig.05**).
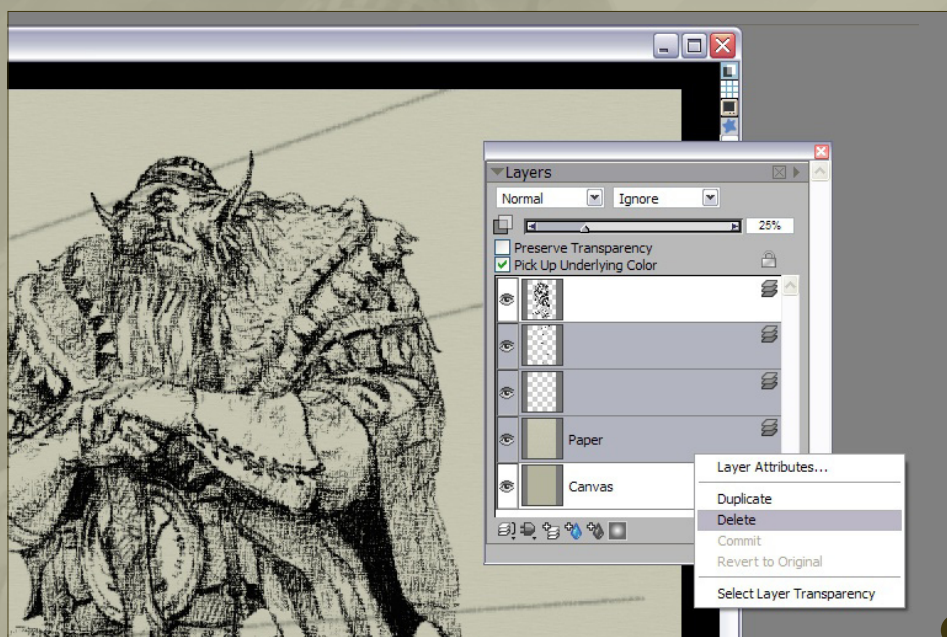
Load the PSD into Painter

Because ArtRage processes paint in a different manner to Painter, PSDs that have been exported from ArtRage usually have a number of extra layers. I load the PSD into Painter and see that there are two blank layers and a paper layer in addition to the canvas and sketch layer (**Fig.06**). In this instance I remove both blank layers and the paper layer, although if you prefer the paper layer color to the canvas color you may want to simply remove the two blank layers and drop the paper layer to the canvas.

Underpainting

On the canvas I use my "Underpainting" Artists' Oils brush to lay down a very quick, very rough approximation of the colors I'll be using. This is simply to act as a guide to the proper painting.

I choose a simple background, which acts as an anchor for the character whilst providing a hint of his natural environment. I will be painting the background in low-contrast hues so that the main figure stands out (**Fig.07**).

Upsize the Image

I'm ready to begin the final painting process so I upsize my image to its working dimensions using Canvas > Resize (make sure Constrain File Size is not ticked). I actually size it to dimensions greater than the specified 2480x3425 pixels, so that I have more scope for adding fine detail where needed. Because I am careful to maintain the aspect ratio I'll be able to resize to the exact specification when the painting is complete (**Fig.08**).

Beginning Painting

Before I start painting I drop the sketch layer to the canvas so that the image is completely flat (in terms of layers). I select the Artists' Oils brush and begin adding rough detail to the troll, starting with the head and face. Because the expression of the troll is important, I work using a relatively small brush, about 10 pixels, with the zoom set at 100% (**Fig.09**).
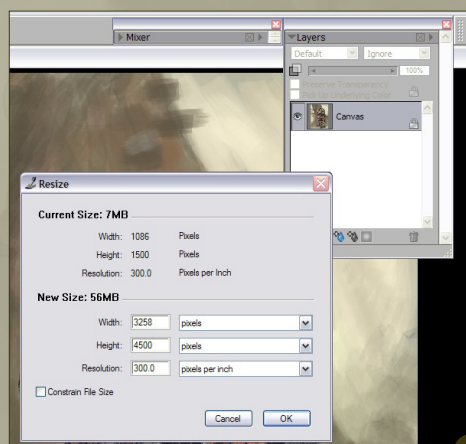
Use the Largest Brush possible

When painting larger areas, especially at this stage, it's a good rule of thumb to use the biggest brush possible. So instead of using the 10-pixel width brush on the ogre's exposed arms, or flowing cloak, I increase the size to 15 or 20 pixels (**Fig.10**). Of course, as detail increases, the size of the brush will decrease.

Using Lighting and Texture

Understanding the ways different materials react to light is key to creating a believable image. Here I combine a number of different materials to form the troll's garb, ranging from dull drapery to the thick, calloused, fur-lined leather covering his shoulders. I depict the leather as having more surface variation of Hue, Saturation and Value than the thin material of his robe, and also

slightly more Specularity (**Fig.11**). Even more Specularity is present on his skin, on the skulls around his waist, and also on the monstrous staff he's leaning on, as a result of the wood being worn smooth over time.

Rough Background Detail

To finish off the rough detail work I move on to the background. I increase my brush size to around 30 pixels for this stage. In order to depict bark on the tree I cross horizontal and vertical bark textures so that the tree's bulk is evident in three dimensions and it doesn't look flat. By easing up on the pen pressure I can blend certain areas so that the texture doesn't overpower the main character. I also darken the area under the troll's feet. This is to anchor the character with the background. If I didn't do this the character would look pasted and it would flatten the image (**Fig.12**).

Painting Leaves

Selecting low saturation colors from my palette, I dab at the ground plane, creating flecks that,

from a distance, resemble leaves. I'll be refining these shapes later on. At the moment it's sufficient that these leafy shapes remind me of leaves and are roughly the right color (**Fig.13**).

Using Colour Variability

I'm about to begin the fine detail stage and this involves using the Round brush. One neat trick to improve the painterly appearance of detail is to use the Color Variability settings. I select In HSV from the pull-down (this stands for Hue, Saturation, Value). I then set the sliders to H: 4%, S: 1%, V: 1%. This means that every time I make a mark with the brush, the color hue that I've chosen will change randomly within a 4% tolerance of my original color choice. In the same way, the Saturation and Value will change randomly within a 1% tolerance. It's a good idea to play around with these settings to see which suits you best (**Fig.14**). A word of warning here. Painter 11 has a bug whereby these settings can spontaneously reset to 0. For this reason I keep the Color Variability panel on my workspace and check it every so often.

Detailed Texturing

With my small, Round brush set to between 5 and 12 pixels, I move over the character and boost the detail level. Because our troll is a forest dweller, and likely a bit of a thug too, I add a few areas of scuffing, staining and dirt on his clothes (**Fig.15**).

The Hands

The troll's hands, resting on top of his staff, are an integral part of this piece, and they need to look just right to make the piece believable. That

means particular attention needs to be paid to the light and shadow, which, broadly speaking, define the form (**Fig.16**). Here we can see the troll's left hand is covering his right, which in turn

is wrapped around the head of the staff. The shadows are therefore placed to be consistent with our light source. Where the fingers of the right hand grip the wood I use a slightly

desaturated highlight to simulate reflected light from the environment. This helps to give solidity to the hand. A light pressure on the pen will blend paint on the canvas. I use this feature to help stop the texture becoming too "scratchy".

Resize the Skulls

I notice that the skulls on the left appear smaller than they should, even taking in account the slight perspective we have going on. I select them roughly using the Polygonal Selection tool, then hit CTRL / cmd C to copy the contents. I remove the selection area using CTRL / cmd - D and paste the skulls into a new layer using CTRL / cmd - V. Using the Edit > Free Transform menu option I enlarge the selection object whilst holding down SHIFT to maintain the aspect ratio (**Fig.17**). Lastly I choose Edit > Transform > Commit Transformation and drop the selection to the canvas. I also neaten the edges a little so it blends with the image.

Robe Material

To paint the orange robe material I enlarge the Round brush to between 10 and 20 pixels. Varying the pen pressure is key in this painting process. In the dark shadows I press quite hard so the dark paint is applied "thickly" whilst

elsewhere I'll ease up on the pressure so that the paint is more opaque and bleeds more readily with existing colors (**Fig.18**).

When applying almost no pressure the brush behaves more like a blender and helps to create graduated yet textured blends between light and shadow. To obtain a high degree of control over your pen sensitivity you should experiment with different settings in both your tablet settings
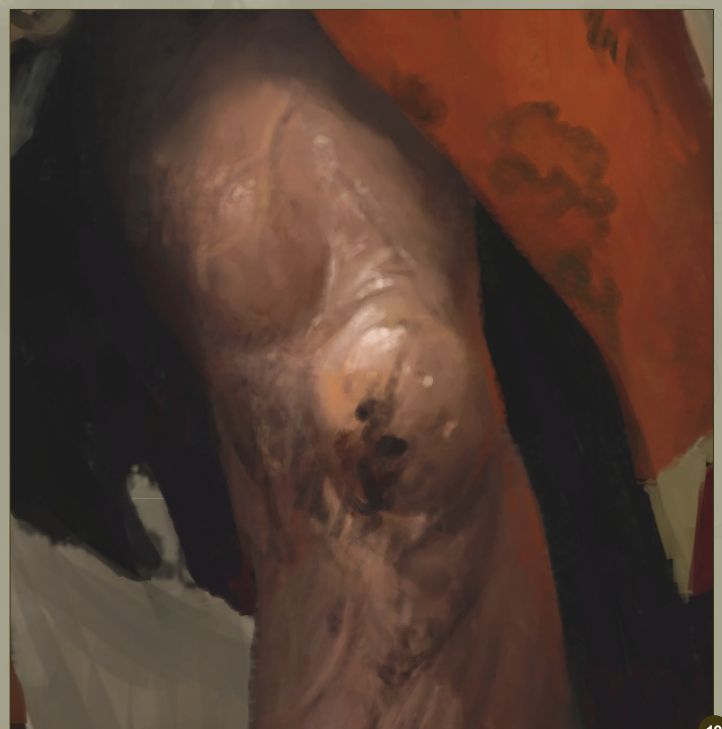
application and via your Edit > Preferences > Brush Tracking menu option in Painter.
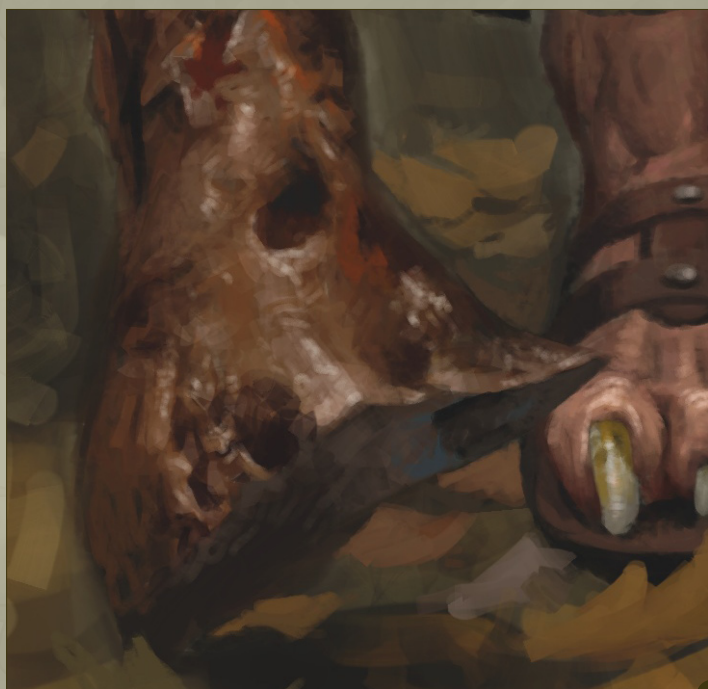
Scarred Skin

It's safe to assume this troll has had a hard life, so the skin around his knees and shins will be scarred and pockmarked (**Fig.19**). With light brushstrokes I make a few dark lines and dots on the skin. To make them appear etched into the skin I make very faint highlights on the

edges, especially the lower edges being that our light source is above. As a general rule, if the highlight is on the side of the blemish furthest from the light source it appears like a groove; if it's on the side nearest the light source it appears like a bump, and of course vice-versa for the shadow. Lastly, I add a bit of dark paint to his knee to represent dirt and scuff marks.

Wood Texture

If you're not careful the wood texture can easily end up looking like skin or cloth. To avoid this I use darker, more saturated colors for the wood base color (**Fig.20**). I add desaturated specular highlights sparingly to the staff to simulate old, worn wood. Placing some of the bright highlights directly onto the dark areas make it appear as if the wood itself is dark, rather than in shadow. This is a useful method of distinguishing dark coloration from shadowed areas, especially on shiny or slimy items.

Autumn Leaves

I use the Artists' Oils brush to further define the leaves on the ground. At this stage I concentrate on getting the colors right and I leave the shapes quite rough. I use a selection of lighter, desaturated colors for the leaves themselves and dab deep purples and black at their

periphery, to suggest the shadow and dark earth beneath (**Fig.21**).

Focus

When painting the leaves it's easy to get caught up painting one leaf after another and forget the overall image. If you're not careful this can flatten the image due to each leaf

being basically the same value and saturation. Zooming out from time to time helps you see how your leaves are becoming part of the scene. Here, I want the leaves in the immediate foreground to be larger, brighter and more colorful than those at the side of the troll, or behind him (**Fig.22**). I also fade out the leaves at the periphery of the piece, to create

exaggerated focus on the main character. I don't use overlays or layers to achieve this effect, rather choose the appropriate color for each leaf and take advantage of the blending function of the brush (Blend increases as Pen Pressure decreases). I also want the troll to appear like he's standing on the ground, not floating in front of it. For this I darken the area below him and to his right, to simulate shadow. Again, I try and pick the correct color from the palette or color wheel rather than using layers. You'll see here that I've also flipped the image, which I do from time to time to check composition and anatomy.

Tree Bark

For the tree and the rest of the background I'm careful to use only low saturation colors of mid- to high-value. This is to give a sense of depth and so they don't compete with the main character. Keeping it loose, and still using the Artists' Oils brush, I dab in darker lines which run vertically up the tree trunk. At irregular intervals I sketch small, rough arcs perpendicular to these lines to give the subtle appearance of bulk. This helps gives the trunk a 3D appearance and avoids the "stage set" look (**Fig.23**).

Final Detail – Leaves

I'm almost finished now so I move around the painting adding some final detail with the Round brush. I don't want to refine the leaves too much so I just spend a few minutes tweaking the brush strokes into more leafy shapes. I don't obsess over each leaf because it's more important to suggest the impression of leaves rather than to painstakingly render each one (**Fig.24**). I also extend the length of the troll's cloak a little, for aesthetic value if not modesty.

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Final Detail – Tree

Using the Round brush I refine some of the tree detail – the fungus and area of discolored bark especially. The level of detail remains much less than that of the main character, so that the background does not compete for attention (**Fig.25**).

A Bit of Texture

As a final touch I choose the Artists' Canvas Paper from the Paper palette (Window > Library Palette > Papers) and using the Round brush at a large size, dab in a few textures in the corners of the image, just to make it a bit more interesting (**Fig.26**). As far as I can tell the image is pretty much finished. However, I set it aside for a few days so I can come back to it with a fresh perspective before I do the final submission. Time allowing, it's always a good idea to take a break before formally declaring a piece complete, otherwise there's a danger of getting "too close" to it and allowing familiarity to mask its flaws.
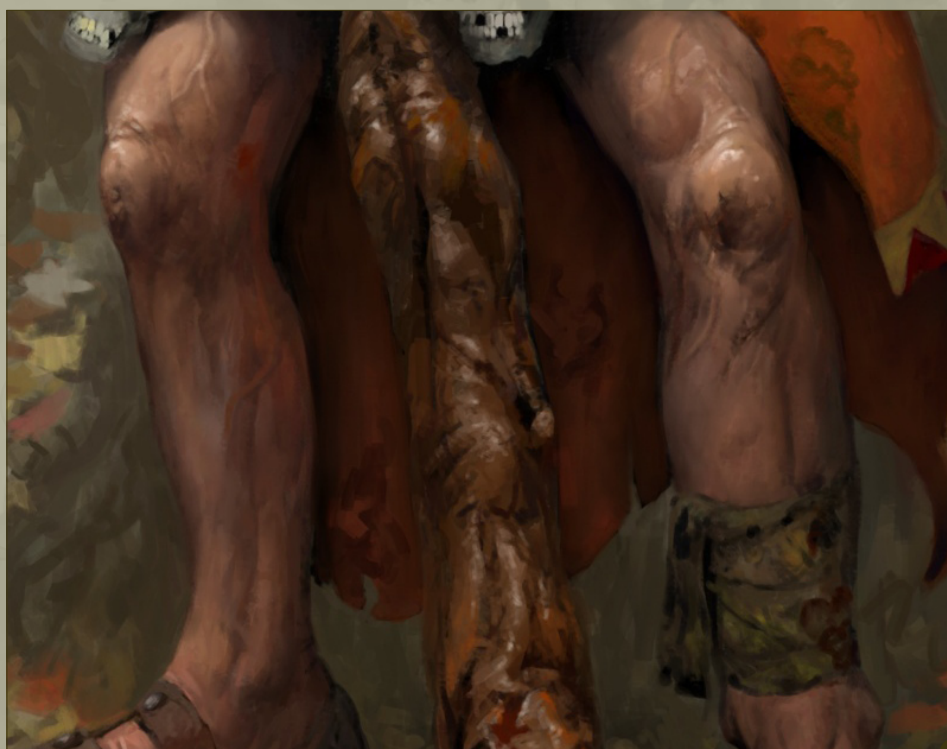

Final Tweaks

When I look at it next I see that the rear hanging edge of the troll's cloak appears too dark, drawing the eye into an unintentional – and somewhat undesirable – focus. I zoom into the shadowed areas and use the Artists' Oils brush to dab in a low value ochre color (**Fig.27**).

Resize and Save

If you recall from **Fig.08**, the image dimensions I've been working with are larger than the specified print size. To obtain the print-spec image I save a copy of the main image and using Canvas > Resize, set the dimensions accordingly. Because the large image is the same aspect ratio as the intended smaller one it isn't distorted.

And that completes the picture. During this tutorial Painter has been creating backups of the file every time I've saved (Edit > Preferences > General – tick Create Backup on Save), which I do regularly. I also backed up my files onto a separate disk at the end of every day I worked on the project, using free backup software. For the sake of a minute or two per day this can save a lot of hassle!

I hope you found this tutorial useful and thanks for reading.

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PHOTOREAL FANTASY
GRIFFIN

The fantasy genre is hugely popular in the CG industry and has been showcased in hundreds of movies, computer games and artworks over the years. With such potential for magic, monsters and imaginations to run wild, it's easy to see why fantasy is such an attractive subject. But giving fantastical ideas enough of a basis in reality to be convincing can be difficult. In this series our talented artists are going to take one aspect of fantasy – legendary creatures – and show us how they would tackle this problem. Some use photo integration, others paint the creatures very carefully with a steady hand, but all share the benefits of their experience and reveal the tricks and techniques they use to make the unreal seem real.

Photoreal Fantasy - Griffin

Software used: Photoshop

Introduction

As part of the series about creating photoreal fantasy creatures I was asked to create an image of a fantasy beast called the Griffin in what could be its natural habitat. It is a creature that is half eagle and half lion, and I decided to illustrate it guarding its roost.

My tutorial brief required me to incorporate some photographic reference use, but a large portion of my art was manually created with nothing more than some simple brushes. Hopefully you find the process enlightening and enjoyable - let's get started!

If you know me, or have read any of my prior tutorials, then you'll know what I am going to begin with – doing research! It's important enough that I pretty much add this section before every tutorial and it's not just to pad out the word count I can assure you! It is just that important.

Whether you know or understand the subject matter intimately or not, you need to fill your consciousness with new information on a consistent basis in order to provide fresh ideas or you run the risk of growing stale and creating highly derivative art.

What does this mean in a practical sense? Well, in today's age of blogs, online articles, image archives, forums and the like this essentially means jumping on the internet and using your favourite search engine to source out some visuals to kick start your engine. Some of my favourites are listed below – it certainly isn't exhaustive, but these are typically all I need to find good reference:

• http://www.google.com
• http://www.ConceptArt.org
• http://www.flickr.com

If you don't have the internet then it means a little more leg work. Going to your local library, picking up a newspaper, magazine, trade journal or watching a movie and stock-piling your mental arsenal from there is a good start.

Whichever resources you choose to draw upon, just make sure you use them as inspiration only and don't plagiarise the work. That would be unscrupulous and does not help your skill level grow; indeed it will more likely lower your confidence in your own abilities.

Back to the griffin! Let's begin with a very rough pencil sketch in order to compose the layout of the final picture (**Fig.01**).

You'll notice that in my sketch, I leave a lot to the imagination; a few scraggy lines denote an ice mountain range, a few scribbles underneath the creature's head mark the position where I

will illustrate a nest. The important thing to keep in mind at this stage is balance - does the image seem balanced? If not, shift some elements around until it does. Often it takes a bit of trial, error and experience which you only get from getting down and dirty.

This process of shifting elements is facilitated by rough abstract shapes and I only put in details where I need to work something out.

You can observe in my sketch that the face/beak area is where I've spent some time adding extra details because this will be the area of focus. That being said, it is still quite rough and will undergo quite a lot of changes as the image progresses.

Create a new layer set to Multiply and drop a cool mid-tone. I have chosen a mid-tone cool hue wash as it allows me to better gauge my

highlights and shadow and because I also want a predominantly cool image (**Fig.02**). I have also started to paint in some darker tones to denote form and establish an idea of where the key light should probably be coming from. During this phase of the illustration, I am using the Soft Round brush that comes standard with Photoshop. This brush allows me to block out large swaths of tone and stops me from starting on the details too early in the process.

Using the mid-tone as a good starting point, paint in the darkest tones and the brightest highlights coming from the sun (which is outside of the image). You can also see that I'm starting to tighten the rendering around the facial area relatively quickly to establish a baseline quality against which the rest of the image will be judged. In particular I am beginning to alter the silhouette of the head and add more weight to the bottom of the griffin's lower beak to counterbalance the heaviness of the top part of the head. In the background, start to drop in some darker tones to show shadow areas on what will eventually become big ice shards/mountains (**Fig.03**).

Once you're happy, press Ctrl + Shift + Alt + E to create a summary layer of all the layers underneath. Next we're going to begin a process of lassoing and shifting various picture elements around. I have darkened the underlying image on the left to show you the two main areas I am repositioning - the eye and the ear (**Fig.04**).
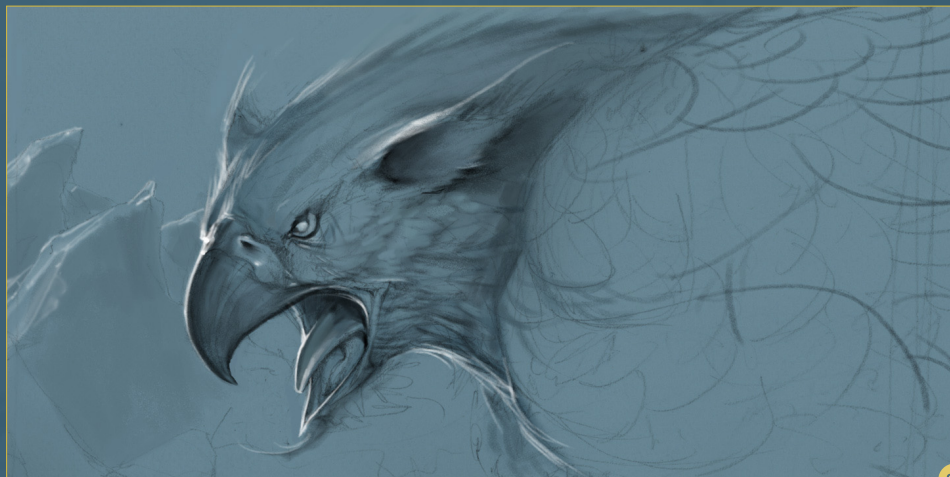
We don't want to concentrate all of our efforts in one area, so I'm going to begin building up the surrounding elements to allow the image to advance as a whole. This allows us to judge whether it is progressing in the desired direction. In particular, start putting in the highlights on the ice in the background and adding more line work design to the wing area. I am using a combination of the Soft Round brush and a custom Chalk brush I have created that simulates the feel of drawing with a pencil (**Fig.05**).

Concentrating on further refining the available details, add some ambient shadow to the base of the ice shards. As they are semi-translucent, the base should be the darkest and they should lighten as they taper off into a point towards the top as they are thinner and allow more light to pass through them. At this stage, we can also start adding some analogous colours, mostly a turquoise blue to the tips of the ice (**Fig.06**). Don't go overboard with color usage, just hint at it to test out if it will work. We can increase the saturation later on if it feels right.

Start to define the form of the head a little more, especially the upper beak as this will be a major point of focus. The tongue feels a little stiff and lifeless to me so I'm going to introduce a little bit more rhythm to it. After all, this is a wild animal and I want all aspects of the creature to emphasize this fact. Towards the top of the griffin's neck, taper it off and increase contrast by adding darker tones to the image.

You may find there are a few harsh areas of areas that could do with being toned down. We want to make sure the viewer's eyes is not distracted by too many points of interest or contrast - particularly the inner membranes, which have a harsh, thick, white light. This might be something I eventually work back in, but for the moment let's paint it out as it's messing with my evaluation of the overall work.

Working on the form of the neck, treat it as more of cylindrical object and darken the underside, as it would receive less illumination with the lighting setup that I have chosen to go with (**Fig.07**).

At this point, I've decided that I will be relating my tonal rendering to two major light sources - the harsh rim light from the left of the image (the sun) and a slightly less harsh fill light from the front, which will act to illuminate the forward facing details of the griffin. On the ice cliffs in the

background continue to add darker tones and on the tips begin to simultaneously add more lighter saturated turquoise. You can see how quickly the ice takes shape just by laying in the correct values in the right place.

Creating a new layer set to Color, lay in some darker pinks for the ear canal, tongue and membrane area (**Fig.08**).

Notice that I haven't completely covered the blue undertones; this is because I am trying to preserve that blue throughout the image as a unifying tone that will tie disparate colors together.

Next, add some darker oranges and some yellow to the beak, again using the same layer set on Color blend mode.

Wanting to give a feel that the beak is semi-translucent (similar to the ice) let's add some

lighter yellow tones to the external thinner parts of the beak. The effect is over-exaggerated for the moment, but it gives nice dimension to the feature. We can tone it down later on (**Fig.09**).

It is probably apparent, but I thought I would mention it here: the method in which I work relies on controlling the pushing of boundaries and correcting mistakes. I don't pretend to know exactly how the image will turn out from the outset, but for me that is half the fun!

In order to break up the image, create a new layer set to Multiply and paint in some darker tone (**Fig.10**). This starts to create some differentiation between components of the image. At this point, I am still unsure as to what colour I want to have the sky, but the dark tone allows me to better judge the ice shards.

Using the Ctrl + Shift + Alt + E command again, flatten out the layers and use the Lasso tool

to select the area around the ear. Move the ear inwards, closer towards the eye, as I feel it makes a nicer trajectory between the eye and the tip of the ear and looks a little more streamlined (**Fig.11**).

Using white, we can also add some more highlights to the tiny feathers around the eye socket. Then, using a custom smoke brush, I'm

adding more vapour coming out of the creature's mouth to give the idea that this is a cold region.

This step (**Fig.12**) is really just a continuation of the previous step: taking the newly copied layer information and, using a Soft Round brush, erasing the sharp edges in order to blend it into the existing background.

The beak's shape isn't that pleasing to me, so let's scrap a lot of the internal detail by painting on flat color and also re-sculpt the area that connects to the nostril area to make it more streamlined (**Fig.13**).

Around the top part of the head and along the neckline, add some white to denote the rim lighting and differentiate the griffin's head from the background.

Being relatively happy with where most of the elements are, I'm going to move on to working on the form of the creature. Choosing a dark tone, close to black, I add more tone around the eye area in order to push the eye inwards (**Fig.14**).

Also darken the base of the ice shards and the wing, and bring out the ear and some of the feathers as well. I'm using a Soft Round brush for this as I find it is perfect for working on ambient occlusion-type shadows.

Creating a new layer set to Colour, lightly paint in some orange tones to introduce some complimentary color to the image and help pull the griffin away from the background (**Fig.15**).

The nostril area isn't looking that good so let's do a little redesigning. Sculpt the shape out of existing highlight, mid-tone and shadow colors already present on the beak so that you don't need to pick new colors (**Fig.16**).

I also start to cut down the amount of Sub-Surface Scattering; this is the amount of light that passes through the material of the beak. We do this by painting the lighter areas a little thinner. To bring out the depth of the eye, increase the highlights around the outside of the eye socket, thereby increasing the contrast. Finally, start blocking out the wing colors a little more, concentrating on the large swaths of dark tone rather than any details.

I'm going to work on the sky next, but instead of painting all the details, let's use a free texture from: http://freetextures.3dtotal.com. **Fig.17** shows the image I'm using, brought into the griffin illustration with no alternations.

Set the Blend mode to Overlay, alter the Opacity to 76% and add a new Vector mask by going to Layer > Vector Mask > Reveal All. Using black, paint out the areas of the sky that are not required (**Fig.18).**

I'm using a mask for this task because it is non-destructive, which means if I need to undo anything, I simply choose white and "uncover" the sky image. Once you are happy with the result, you can apply the mask to save memory.

The sky is a little dark, so, using an Adjustment layer, alter the levels to brighten up the image (**Fig.19**).

Next add a layer mask to this Adjustment layer (like in the previous step) to hide the areas that do not need brightness adjustment, which is everything apart from the sky. I'm using a Highlight value of 154.

Using a Soft Round brush, brush on a very

small amount of white across the sky area. This simulates a bloom from the sun that is outside of the picture frame (**Fig.20**).

Using a Chalk brush, I also rough in the twigs of the nest to make sure that it will compositionally work well with the existing picture elements.

Using a smaller brush, start to refine the details. I'm using a small version of the Soft Round and make sure to zoom into the image (**Fig.21**).

In particular, pay attention to adding more highlights around the eye and using the Soft Round brush to smooth out the textures. Using highlights, we can also create a sense of depth and wetness to the eye region and add in a few scratch marks that may have resulted from a fight with another wild animal. On the clouds I use an Overlay layer, a Soft Round

brush and again paint in some white bloom around the left rim of the cloud masses to indicate where they are being lit from.

In order to increase the feel of this creature being of the wild, block in ruffled feathers to the back of its head and neck, similar to those found on some species of eagle (**Fig.22**).

Zooming in once again, I'm using a very small Hard brush to work on the tiny feathers around the face and neck that will help sell the image. We can also use a Soft Round brush with white to smoothen out the area beneath the ear.

Moving on to the twigs, color-pick the established colors and begin to refine them

into branches of a tree. I brush a little of the background blue onto some of the branches to give them a sense of depth.

Now let's add a egg! Start painting in a partial oval (**Fig.23**). At this stage we only need to block it in with a little hint of the light direction. I'm using a Soft Round brush for this and warm, desaturated tones to create the block-in. Using a very small brush I also begin to add minute strokes to the feathers on the wings to imply detail.

Concentrating on the egg, zoom in and use the Soft Round brush to increase the amount of detail and sharpen the rendering (**Fig.24**). To establish more form, push the darker values, making it seem more oval in shape.

Begin the block-in of the talon using a Chalk brush (**Fig.25**).

Choose a bright yellow similar to the highlights on the beak. Apply only slight pressure so that the colors optically meld together.

Darken the background of the ice region with a Multiply layer. This is done to increase the contrast between the background and the griffin, which is the main subject in the image (**Fig.26**).

Begin to add highlights and also darken the talon and claws. Add highlights to the claws, making sure to follow the form and thinking about where the reflected light would be on the

claw. Zooming in, refine the claw and make sure to use a high-res photograph as a reference for the details (**Fig.27**).

Finally, let's add a little bit of atmosphere in the form of falling snowflakes on a separate layer, which you can paint with a combination of a Soft Round brush and applying Motion Blur (**Fig.28**).

Darren Yeow

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"I had a lot of fun painting the boy and the monster. It was fun to play around with how the light interacted with them and work out which colors I needed to focus on."

CLOSET MONSTER

This month's Making Of comes courtesy of Rafael Pereira do Nascimento, who describes how he put a new twist on the old monsters-in-the-closet theme.

Making Of Closet Monster

Software used: Adobe Photoshop

The most important thing I've learned with professional work is to search for references when you start a new piece of artwork. So, before I start a new project, I always come up with a general idea of what I'm going to produce. Then I start to search for as many references as possible to refine the idea.

For this particular project the main references were the film and art book of *Monster Inc*. I want to say too that there isn't a magical brush which "paints" for you, or a secret plugin that makes you paint like Da Vinci. Everything I've learned and applied for this project came from watching Gnomon's DVDs, talking with other professionals and observing their nature. The important thing is to understand the main concepts and how to apply them.

I quickly established a cartoonish style and created a character with the feeling of a child bully. Then I started to think about how it would be if this guy wasn't afraid of the things that came out of his closet (**Fig.01**).

With the general idea set, I started to refine it. I worked a bit more with the design of the characters and the scene itself (**Fig.02**).
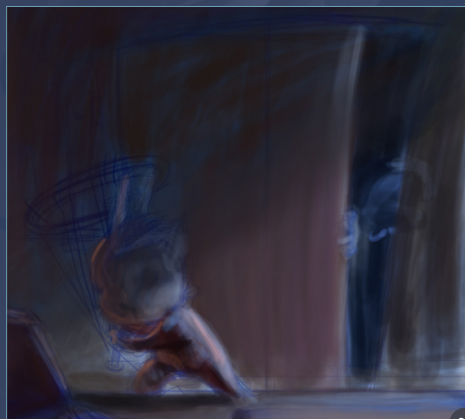
Then I started to think how I would work with the colors and how they would behave in the scene. So I did a preliminary color study, which gave
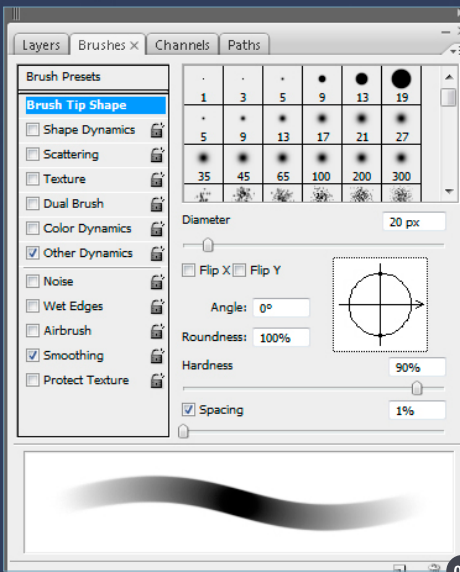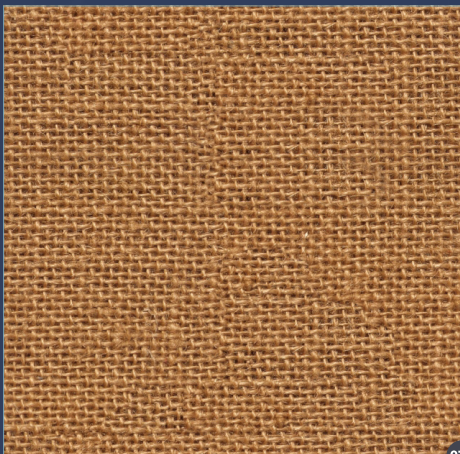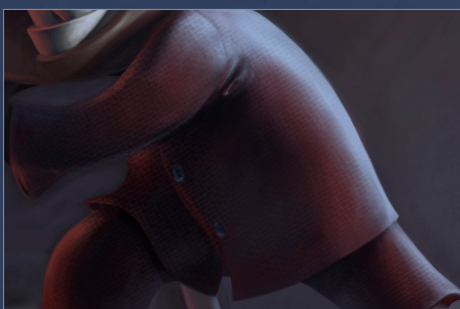
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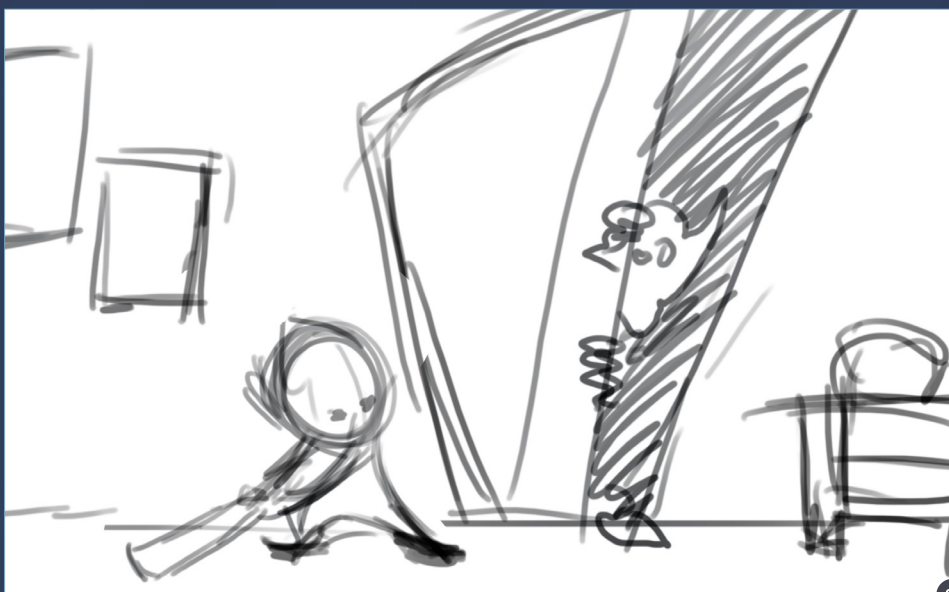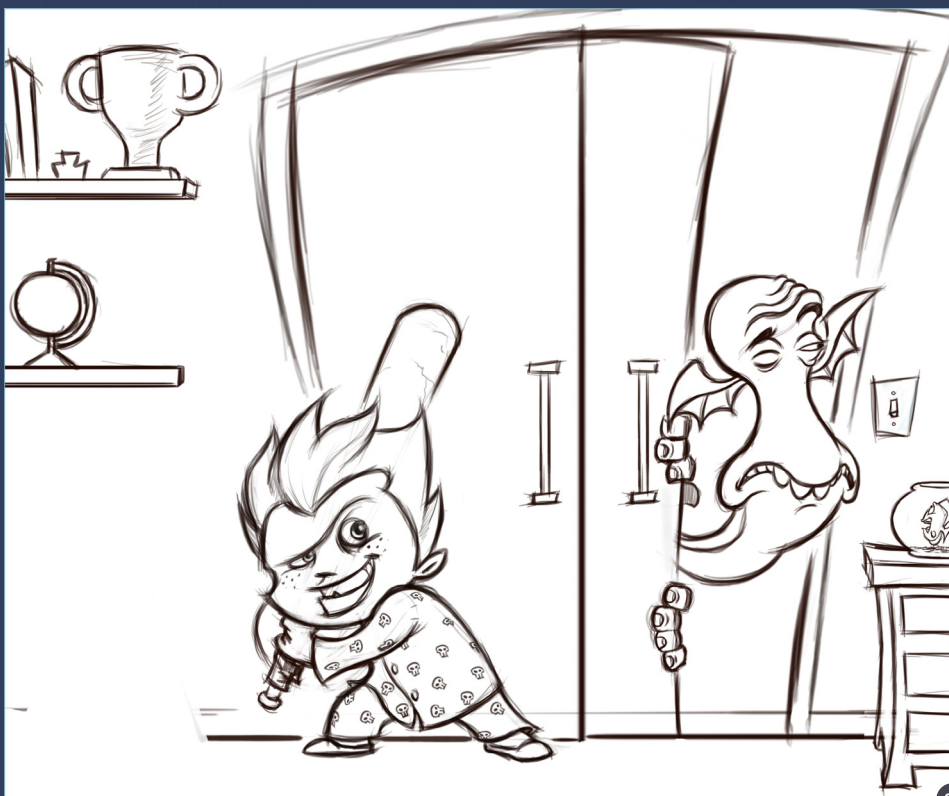
me a clear idea of how I would work to get to the final piece. **(fig.03)**

I think this is a great thing to do especially if you are working professionally. During this stage I decided to have my main source of light coming from the window and the back light coming from the door on the opposite side of the scene (**Fig.04**).

I am used to working with the contours as a guide for the first volumes. After I had most of a piece done, I hid the contour layer and then I started to refine it (**Fig.05a – 05b**). I confess that when I turned off this layer I had a little panic, because the volumes got a bit confused and I asked myself: "My God, now what?" So I patiently started to work individually on each element. The more I worked on it, the more the elements started to come out.

I worked with a Round brush with Shape Dynamics turned off and Other Dynamics turned on with Pen Pressure, Spacing set to 1% and Hardness between 85-90% to block in all of the painting (**Fig.06**).

I kept in mind that although it was a night scene with a strong blue light, all the colors of the elements still need to be in perceptive but also influenced by the light. I had a lot of fun painting the boy and the monster. It was fun to play around with how the light interacted with them and work out which colors I needed to focus on.

After I had the boy well defined, I decided to put some texture on his clothes. I searched for a suitable wool texture and applied it. I used the Overlay blending mode and adjusted its Opacity (**Fig.07a – 07b**).

I applied a skin texture on his face too. I didn't apply it on his hands because they were in the shadows. Again I used the Overlay blending mode and adjusted its Opacity (**Fig.08a – 08b**).
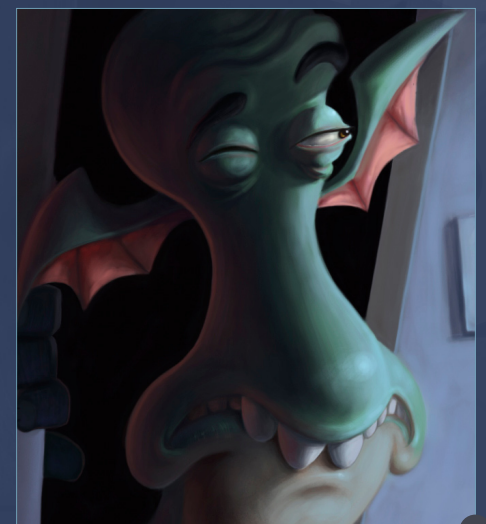
I had the most fun with, and put the most work
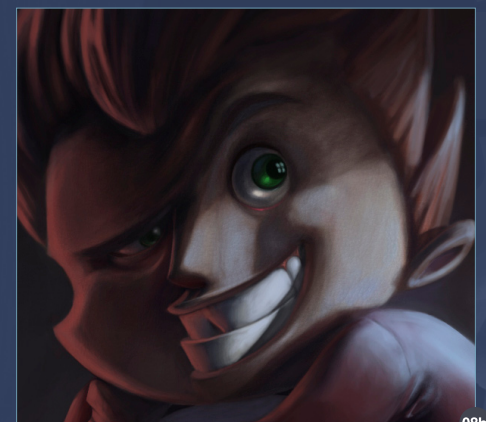
into, the monster. It was fun because his face is hilarious and during its painting I caught myself laughing. It was hard work because of its volumes, mainly its mouth. It was very frustrating until I found the right volume.

I had to do a lot work on the teeth in particular, because I had to think about how the specular, shadow, projected shadow and light influences would behave (**Fig.09**).
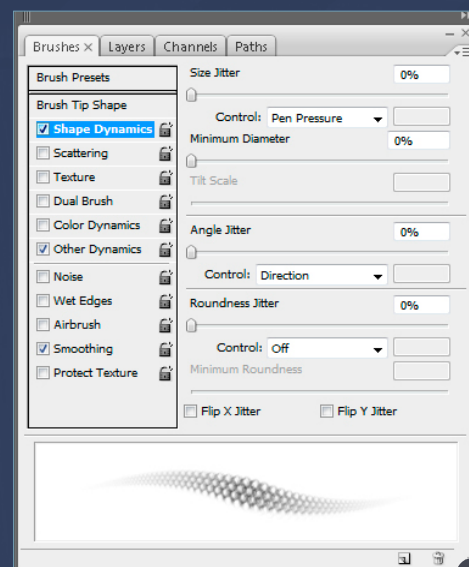
I develop a specific brush to do the scale on the monster's face. I used this brush with Pen Pressure and Shape Dynamics turned on, with Angle Jitter control set to Direction mode.

This brush allowed me to establish the scale while also respecting the volumes of the closet monster (**Fig.010a - 10b**).

The little fish was easy to deal with. It only took a little work to add the caustic effect of its little aquarium, using an Abstract brush. The water reflection was done randomly, because in nature water doesn't follow a specific pattern. So I decided to make it believable, but random (**Fig.11**).

I added some wood texture to the closet door. I then worked on the reflection of the trophies and took away the focus of the furniture on the first plane to give my perspective. I textured the wall and added some drawing of defeated monsters as well as a count to show how many the boy had defeated so far. During the process, I noticed that the closet was empty, so I decided to add some clothes there (**Fig.12**).

To finalize the image, I applied the high pass filter (this filter makes the scene clearer and brings some details alive too) and a blue filter on the whole image to add ambience (**Fig.13).**

And that is it! I hope you found this Making Of useful and I would like to thank *2DArtist* magazine for this amazing opportunity.

Rafael Pereira do Nascimento

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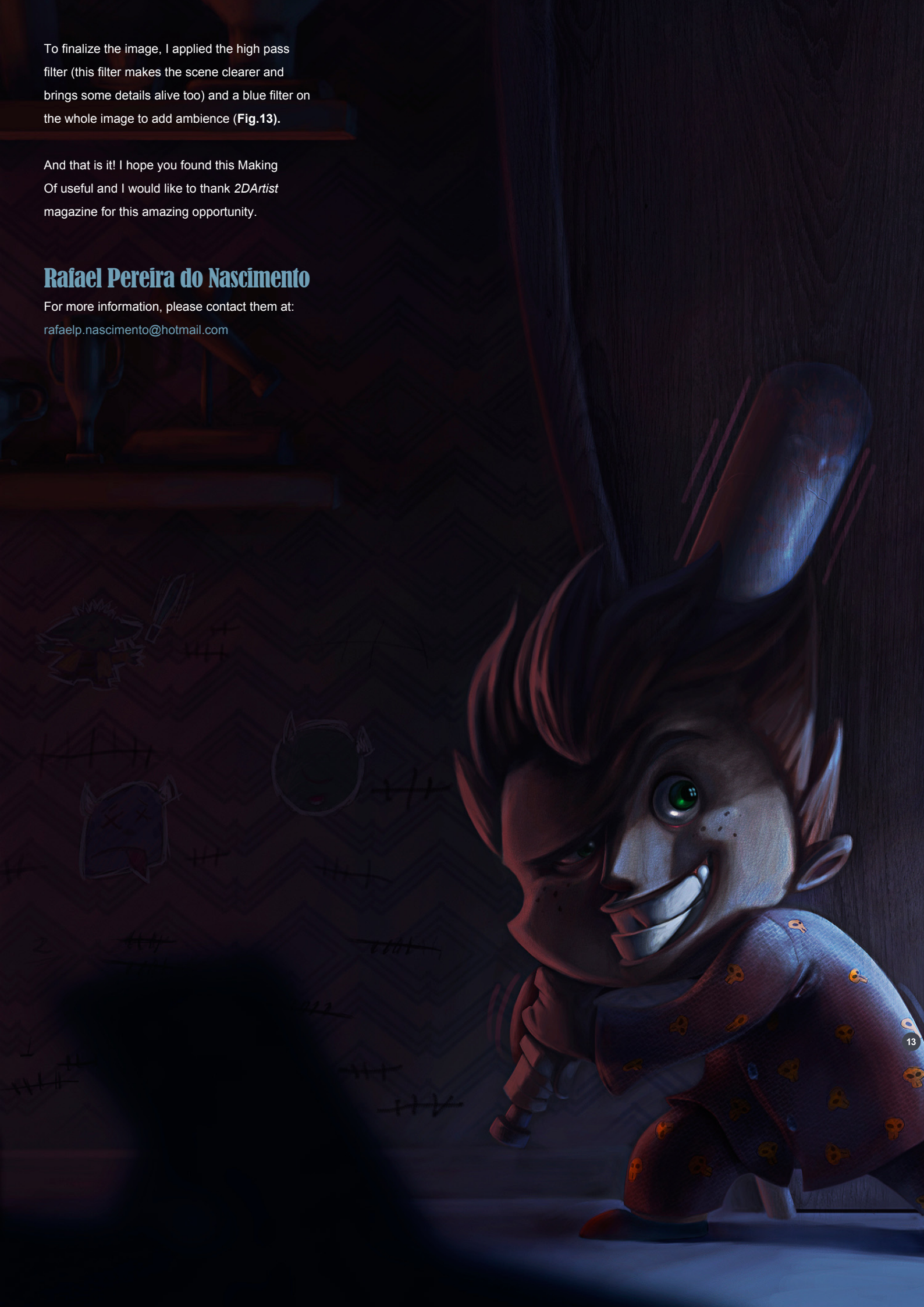
Digital Art Masters
Volume 5

With the release of 3DTotal's book, *Digital Art Masters: Volume 5*, we have some exclusive chapters for you...

This is more than just an artwork book. Not only does it feature full-colour, full-page images, but each artist has given a detailed description, in their own words, of the creation process behind each piece of published artwork. And they've done it especially for this book!

This month we feature:

"Baba Yaga"

by Min Yum

The following shots of the "Baba Yaga" book pages are featured here in full-resolution and can be read by zooming in...

BABA YAGA
By Min Yum
JOB TITLE: Concept Artist / Illustrator
SOFTWARE USED: Photoshop

INTRODUCTION

Baba Yaga was created for a Character of the Week activity at conceptart.org. I didn't know about Slavic folklore at that time and so spent a bit of time reading up on the background history of the tale. It's a rather dark tale about an old witch (hag) who flies around in a giant mortar preying on small children! I was instantly drawn to the story and wanted to create a really sinister witch. A quick search online turned up a large collection of previously created Baba Yaga interpretations by other artists, which worked as a huge inspiration for me, and I hastily started drawing up my initial designs of the old hag. Throughout this account, I will try and summarize my working methods and share my thoughts during the process.

> COMPOSITION IS SOMETHING WE OFTEN OVERLOOK, MAYBE BECAUSE THERE'S NO BLACK AND WHITE ANSWER, BUT IT HAS THE POWER TO MAKE THE PICTURE WORK OR TO TURN IT INTO A VERY BORING IMAGE

SKETCH & TELLING A STORY

My first approach was to simply design the witch and interpret how she would look. **Fig.01** shows my initial sketch of her (it's a cleaned-up version). But with Baba Yaga being a folk story, I felt compelled to tell a story instead of just designing an old witch. I remembered reading about Vasilisa, who seems to appear in different versions of the folklore as a heroine. Maybe I got greedy, but I wanted to show more than just the witch by incorporating both characters into a scene and showing the interaction between the two.

With that in mind, the composition was going to play a crucial role in describing this scene. Composition is something we often overlook, maybe because there's no black and white answer, but it has the power to make the picture work or to turn it into a very boring image. That led me to picture a scene with the witch overpowering the girl, hunching over and breathing down onto her. I wanted the witch to be almost creature-like in appearance and show gestures that portrayed a predator, fondly playing with its prey before the inevitable.

Fig.02 shows the initial rough sketch with the witch overpowering the helpless girl within a cramped corner of

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the frame. The girl's supporting role was to compliment the witch in both the composition and in the story. The background trees were included to break up the overall flow of the witch and to add more interest.
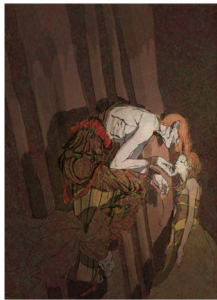
A cleaned-up version of the sketch can be seen in **Fig.03**.

BLOCKING-IN

This step is where I define the overall mood of the painting. I am rather fond of playing with direct lighting, but thought it was also good to go for a more dynamic setup to compliment the composition in this image. I created a layer underneath the cleaned-up sketch and started with a simple color scheme. Some texture brushes were used with Color Dynamics enabled to help break up the colors. I've mostly used red and green to roughly block in the overall mood. This is also where I defined the local colors for each area of the painting (**Fig.04**).

> THIS PART OF THE PAINTING IS ALWAYS DAUNTING AND TIME-CONSUMING, YET AT THE SAME TIME IT'S ALSO THE PART I LOOK FORWARD TO THE MOST

I also went ahead and adjusted the image to add stronger contrasts. More attention needed to be focused on Baba Yaga, so I made her skin paler and darkened the background with cooler blue tones. The shadows and highlights were done with different brush blending modes: Multiply and Overlay, respectively (**Fig.05**).

RENDERING

This part of the painting is always daunting and time-consuming, yet at the same time it's also the part I look forward to the most.

Digital painting has the advantage of allowing you to zoom into an area to add details and provide greater control. The disadvantage of such control is that we can often overlook the bigger picture and add too much unnecessary detail. I sometimes find myself over-rendering unnecessary details that aren't going to show up in the final image, which can eat up a lot of time. The easiest way I've found to overcome this is by opening a duplicate window of the same painting, but at a smaller scale, similar to how Navigator works in Photoshop but with a bigger window. By doing this I am always reminded of the bigger picture rather than smaller insignificant details. It can be found under Window > Arrange > New Window for ....

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Either way, I enjoy the rendering stage despite the grief it gives me. It's a simple process of following the blocked-in colors and of defining/redefining details. I usually start with a good, strong drawing and try not to use references most of the time, unless I am dealing with an unfamiliar subject, in which case I tend to do studies prior to starting an image rather than during. This seems to help avoid the issue of copying too much and also helps me to remember better for future references. **Fig.06** shows a close-up view; almost done!

> IT'S TOUGH BEING A GOOD CRITIC AFTER STARING AT THE IMAGE FOR SO LONG, AND OFTEN YOU FIND YOURSELF GETTING ATTACHED TO A CERTAIN PART OF THE IMAGE THAT DOESN'T ALWAYS WORK WITHIN THE BIGGER PICTURE
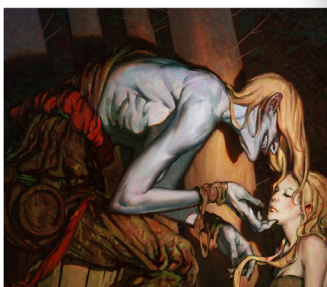
Finishing up

I always find the last five to ten percent of the painting the hardest; tying up all the loose ends and making sure there's consistency with the brush strokes and details, without losing the original idea. It's tough being a good critic after staring at the image for so long, and often you find yourself getting attached to a certain part of the image that doesn't always work within the bigger picture. I try and flip my image horizontally every now and then and even work on it flipped before flipping it back. It seems as though our eyes and brain sometimes like to trick our judgment and it's often hard to tell whether something is misplaced/wrong unless it's presented in a different form. This proves to be a great technique in picking out anything unusual! It's also a good idea to ask for criticism from your peers to see if you've missed anything, just as I did in this case.

Fig.07 shows another close-up.

Conclusion

If I were to do it again I think the girl could have been designed to look more unique as she perhaps feels a little too generic at the moment. Maybe I would have given the characters a softer appearance and painted them in a more classically realistic style. Ultimately, it was fun and I am rather pleased with the end result. Working on this image has also led me to think and ask more questions about composition, which I may have neglected in the past. It definitely deserves more credit and exploration in my book!

Artist Portfolio

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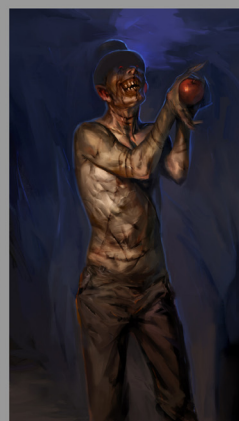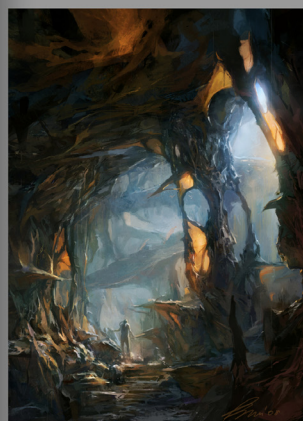
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